20c

TRADE MARK REG.

# Frontier Stories

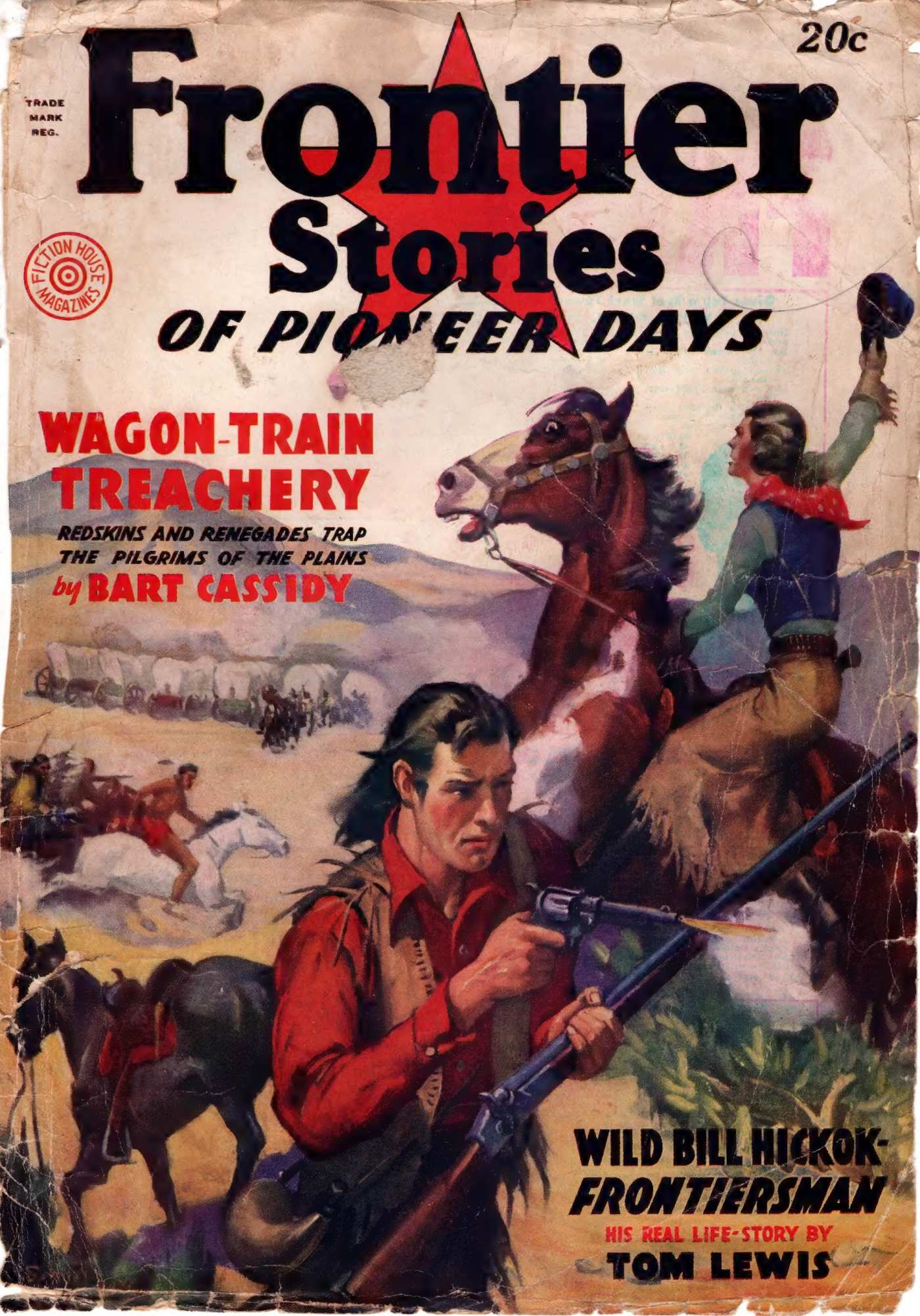
## OF PIONEER DAYS

FICTION HOUSE MAGAZINES

## WAGON-TRAIN TREACHERY

REDSKINS AND RENEGADES TRAP THE PILGRIMS OF THE PLAINS

by BART CASSIDY



## WILD BILL HICKOK-FRONTIERSMAN

HIS REAL LIFE-STORY BY

TOM LEWIS

# GREATEST BARGAIN
## IN TEN YEARS

# Remington NOISELESS Portable

## NOW 10¢ A DAY!

**MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE**
**10-DAY FREE TRIAL OFFER**

**10-DAY FREE TRIAL.** Now for the first time in history you can own a real Remington NOISELESS Portable for only 10¢ a day or $3 a month. Think of it! The finest Remington Portable ever built at the lowest terms we have ever offered. Every attachment needed for complete writing equipment—PLUS THE FAMOUS NOISELESS FEATURE. Brand new. Not rebuilt. Send coupon today.

**WE PAY ALL SHIPPING CHARGES.** You don't risk a penny. We send this Remington Noiseless Portable direct from factory to you with TEN DAYS' FREE TRIAL. If you are not satisfied, send it back.

## FREE →
### TYPING COURSE

With your New Remington Noiseless Portable we will send you—absolutely FREE—a 19-page course in typing. It teaches the Touch System, used by all expert typists. It is simply written and completely illustrated. Instructions are as simple as A, B, C. Even a child can easily understand this method. A little study and the average person, child or adult, becomes fascinated. Follow this course during the 10-Day Trial Period we give you with your typewriter and you will wonder why you ever took the trouble to write letters by hand.

## FACTORY TO YOU

The gem of all portables. Imagine a machine that speaks in a whisper . . . that removes all limitations of time or place. You can write in a library, a sick room, a Pullman berth without the slightest fear of disturbing others. And in addition to quiet, a superb performance literally makes the words seem to flow from the machine. Equipped with all attachments that make for complete writing equipment, the Remington Noiseless Portable produces manifolding and stencil cutting of truly exceptional character. Furnished in black with shining chromium attachments.

**SPECIFICATIONS.** Standard Keyboard. Finished in glistening black with chromium attachments. Takes paper 9.5 inches wide. Writes lines 8.2 inches wide. Standard size, 12 yard ribbon. Makes up to 7 clear legible carbons. Back spacer. Full size platen. Paper fingers, roller type. Black key cards with white letters. Double shift key and shift lock. Right and left carriage release. Right and left cylinder knobs. Large cushion rubber feet. Single or double space adjustment. All the modern features plus NOISELESS operation.

**MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES OPEN.** Hundreds of jobs are waiting for people who can type. A typewriter helps you put your ideas on paper in logical, impressive form . . . helps you write clear, understandable sales reports, letters, articles, stories. A Remington Portable has started many a young man and woman on the road to success.

**A GIFT FOR ALL THE FAMILY.** If you want a gift for birthday, Christmas or Graduation . . . one Father, Mother, Sister or Brother will use and appreciate for years to come . . . give a Remington Noiseless Portable. We will send a Remington Noiseless Portable to anyone you name, and you can still pay for it at only 10c a day. Few gifts are so universally pleasing as a new Remington Noiseless Portable. Write today.

## FREE CARRYING CASE

Also under this new Purchase Plan we will send you FREE with every Remington Noiseless Portable a special carrying case sturdily built of 3-ply wood. This handsome case is covered with heavy du Pont fabric. The top is removed by one motion, leaving the machine attached to the base. This makes it easy to use your Remington anywhere—on knees, in chairs, on trains. Don't delay . . . send in the coupon for complete details!

*Mail Now!*

Remington Rand Inc., Dept. 318-5
315 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Please tell me how I can get a new Remington Noiseless Portable typewriter, plus FREE typing course and carrying case, for only 10c a day. Also send me new illustrated catalogue.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

THIS IS A MAGAZINE OF FICTION. THE CHARACTERS NAMED AND INCIDENTS DESCRIBED DO NOT REFER TO ANY ACTUAL PERSON

Reg. U. S. Pat. Office

# Frontier Stories

J. W. GLENISTER, President T. T. SCOTT, Treasurer and General Manager MALCOLM REISS, Editor

## A NOVELET OF THE PLAINS

**WAGON-TRAIN TREACHERY** . . . . . **Bart Cassidy** 3

Inside the wagon-train ring men spat in his face. Outside, war-wild braves crouched —and still the Laramie Kid fought on to save these misled Pilgrims of the Plains.

## TWO COMPLETE FRONTIER NOVELS

**WALKER'S WILDMEN** . . . . . **Captain Winfield Carter** 38

Across the jungled Isthmus sounded the tramp of Billy Walker's red-shirted filibuster legion—and the tall Texan forsook fortune's lure for the wild, red rip of battle.

**DEATH RIDES TO TOMBSTONE** . . . . . **John Starr** 90

Watch out, Geronimo, with your blood-mad braves! For a stranger is riding the Tombstone Trail—a greenhorn with the smile of a cherub, and Hell's own Colt-skill!

## FOUR FRONTIER FEATURES

**WILD BILL HICKOK—FRONTIERSMAN** . . . . . **Tom Lewis** 20

Life-story of the greatest gun-slinger of them all—only once did he turn tail.

**LONE LONG-KNIFE** . . . . . **Carson McRae** 31

The Company needed a scout to out-smart the Sioux. Yarcum was their man.

**LAST OF THE WASHOANS** . . . . . **Benjamin F. Ferrill** 71

"When the buffaloes return—then I shall tell the secret of lost gold!"

**FAMOUS GUNS AND QUICK KILLERS** . . . . . **T. W. Deaver** 78

The famed killers of the Old West each boasted a preference in the way of hardware.

**THE TRADING POST** . . . . . **"Frontiersman"** 126

Out of Texas comes a strange, iron-bound rumor that Jesse James still lives!

Cover by Sidney Riesenberg

Story heads by W. M. Allison and Earl Mayan

**Summer Issue, 1937**
**Volume 13. No. 9**

**20c per copy**

FRONTIER: Published quarterly by FICTION HOUSE, INC., 461 Eighth Ave., New York, N. Y. Copyright 1937 by FICTION HOUSE. Printed in U. S. A. All rights reserved. For advertising rates address: THE NEWSSTAND FICTION UNIT, 420 LEXINGTON AVE., New York.

SIXTEEN years ago a new, exciting, swift-moving brand of fiction exploded in print. Story-telling in the raw. Story-telling with all the fancy frills sliced off. *Action* was the byword of this magazine. *Action* is *still* the byword. "Wait till you see the whites of their eyes—then shoot!"

Action Stories has long set the pace in the Western-Adventure field. Vital, smashing, speedy yarns—stories with the lean red meat of drama packed tight. Action Stories today is as great a leader as ever. Heading the list in the current issue are the banner-names of Walt Coburn, John Starr, 'Gene Cunningham, Bart Cassidy, and a string of others.

**Get a copy today**

**ACTION STORIES**

**On sale at all newsstands**

***The Romance of the West....*** six-guns and saddle leather, sun splashed longlands where light-triggered waddies and free-riding cowgirls buck the game under a blood-red moon.

***Written with Action....*** by top-hand writers, the lure of the West in their hearts, their yarns timed to the quick tempo of rolling hooves and sudden guns.

**Get a copy today**

**Lariat**
**STORY MAGAZINE**

**On sale at all newsstands**

**Inside that thin, white, wagon-train circle men jeered and spat in his face. Outside, war-wild braves crouched in the night. And still the Laramie Kid fought on so that these poor misled fools would not die.**

*A Complete Plains Novelet*

# Wagon Train Treachery

By BART CASSIDY

THE "Laramie Kid" swallowed the last morsel of his meal of jerky, washed it down with a hearty swig from his water bottle. Then, with that natural caution acquired during a long and dangerous sojourn in the domains of painted warriors, he left the protecting shadow of the boulder behind him and crept to the edge of the cliff. Carefully he scanned the sweeping roll of plain stretching far below. Like a strung-out silver thread, broken in spots, twisting crazily in and out, white dots of canvas-covered wagons drawn by sluggish oxen headed into the land of the setting sun. A minute or so he watched the crawling train, then returned, on his belly, to the engulfing shade of the boulder.

"I can't stand this doing nothing, Joe," he said to his companion who was sitting on the ground, back resting against a low rock within easy reach of his long border rifle.

Joseph Simpkins, tall and spare, apparently nearing sixty, with heavy bushy eyebrows dotted with graying streaks, was attired in the costume of a scout of the plains —fringed leather shirt, buckskin leggings, moccasins and a low, wide-brimmed flapping hat. Known far and near on the plains as "Mebbe" Joe, both whites and Indians alike respected him healthily.

A flash of sympathy softened the rugged

countenance of the old scout. He knew the cause of the restlessness of his companion. It was a girl. Many times during their close association of the past years, he had seen the Laramie Kid, when thinking himself unobserved, bring forth a small photo from his pouch.

Once, back in old Fort Laramie, their headquarters, the treasured object had fallen to the ground unnoticed, and Mebbe Joe had returned it to its owner. Inadvertently, for he would have never done it on purpose, he caught a glimpse of the face. He had marveled at its loveliness. However, no word had passed between them, then or since, but "Mebbe" Joe understood and sympathized.

"Mebbe yu'll git some excitement soon, Laramie, an' then mebbe yuh won't. It used to be I felt the same as yuh, but whut I desires most now is air."

He drew in a deep breath and exhaled it slowly. "What with the durned waggin' trains a-pourin' in from the East, it's gittin' sort o' crowded, tu be sure. Mebbe yu're right, Laramie, 'cause afore long, if it keeps up, yuh won't be able tu move without a jostlin' o' yore neighbor. Mebbe it *is* time to leg it further West afore we gits stalled complete. Thar ain't no breathin' space left hereabouts. It's worse'n a durned city."

Each of the two, unknown to the other, was leading up in a roundabout way to the issue nearest his heart. Although they had been inseparable companions for years, still was there retained in them that reluctance, that inherent unselfish backwardness of the true plainsman to openly express a direct desire without first sounding out the other's wishes.

The Laramie Kid, the more impetuous of the two, was the first to break the ice.

"Wonder if there's any truth to the tale that a nugget was brought in from California? Heard it was picked up in Sutter's Mills—'round Sacramento way."

The Laramie Kid's keen black eyes flashed fire as he waxed enthusiastic over his subject. "There are fortunes there for the taking. Wouldn't mind having a crack at that gold. You know, Joe, there's plenty of *air* in California, and it isn't crowded much—*yet.*"

"Mebbe thar *is* somethin' tu the tale," admitted Mebbe Joe, slowly. "Know Kit Carson tolerable well—it war him whut brung in the gold. Yeah, thar's gold in Californy, an' I'm lookin' tu git me a woman an' settle down afore the arrer o' some pesky redskin saves me the trouble. Yuh aimin' tuh marry, Laramie?"

It was a weak, half-hearted attempt to draw out his partner in regard to his secret. "Mighty pretty gals back in Fort Laramie, an' they do say yu're the most handsomest man west o' the Mississippi."

The Laramie Kid turned red.

"Girls out here don't worry me any, Joe. They're fine girls right enough and a man could pick a good wife from among them, but I'm hiking for California. The starting time is what interests me now—and not women."

Mebbe Joe was glad to get away from the ticklish subject. He bit off a huge mouthful of a plug.

"How yuh goin' tu git through tu Californy?" he asked. "Yuh ain't reckinin' on j'inin' up with one o' them waggin trains, an' eatin' of dust all the way, are yuh?"

"Reckon you and I can get through alone, Joe."

"Mebbe. Don't forgit, though, that thar's hell in the air. Yeah, it's plausible tu callate thar's goin' tu be right smart h'ar liftin' hereabouts, an' mighty soon. The Injuns is risin'. They claims the white man is a-stealin' o' their lands an' a-drivin' the buffalo out o' existence. An' from thar p'int o' view, I reckin' they may be right. But it's them or the whites, so in the long run the Injuns ain't got no chance.

"While yuh war a-carryin' thet message through tu Gin'ral Kearney at Leavenworth, I warn't idle none. The Sioux is puttin' on their war p'int, an' so is the Cheyennes. An' them durned Bennacks whut used tu run if yuh p'inted a finger at 'em, is dancin' the war dance. The Arapahoes is huntin' down as low as the Sweetwater—an' thet ain't no peaceable sign. The Crows, the worst o' the bunch, has pitched thar tepees close in an' runners is out between the tribes. Yeah, it's a gin'ral uprisin' of red ag'in white, an' hell'll be a-poppin'." He spat a stream of tobacco juice against a rock. "What do thet waggin train look like thet's been headin' this way?"

"Oh, it's just a train," replied the Laramie Kid without interest. "Kind of slipshod in the way it travels."

"Yeah, thar leader don't seem tu know much 'bout directin' waggins. It must be a new waggin train from the East whut don't know the country, and thet the Injuns is risin'. Thet air train is walkin' plumb intu trouble. Reckin' we jest as well offer 'em a little advice."

"If we don't they won't live long," said Laramie.

THE Laramie Kid watched the advancing caravan for a full minute, then after a glance over his shoulder at the sun in the west, he studied the lengthening shadows creeping out on the prairie like an inky tide from the mountain range.

"The train ought to be abreast of us in half an hour," he said. "The Indians won't attack tonight. I think they'll wait until the wagons reach the west pass. The train will have to string out there."

Time dragged by. Mebbe Joe touched his partner on the shoulder to attract his attention.

Far in advance of the oncoming train could be seen a solitary horseman galloping toward them. In silence they awaited his arrival. As he drew nigh, the two men noted that he was thickset, black-visaged and evil-looking. His mount, with distended nostrils showing red, dripped sweat, its sides and belly torn and lacerated by the cruel rowels of huge Mexican spurs.

"That ain't no way tu use horseflesh," snorted Mebbe Joe.

The Laramie Kid offered no answer, but it was plain to see by the flash in his eyes that he was angry. At the edge of their clump of green, the rider jerked his horse to a halt, turned in the saddle and looked back at the distant train. Apparently satisfied, he cast covert glances about him, dismounted and tied the trembling, sweating horse securely to a low, stout limb jutting up from the ground.

"I'll teach you *now,*" he muttered aloud, fiercely. "There's no girl out here to beg you off."

From his saddle he secured a blacksnake and stepping back, measured the distance to the horse. The lash curled back over his shoulder, sang wickedly through the air and landed viciously on the flank of the horse. The animal reared and plunged, jerking at the stout reins holding it until the cut mouth colored crimson. Again the whip went back and landed with all the force of its wielder's powerful arm.

The Laramie Kid stepped from cover.

"You've whipped that horse enough!" came in low, ominous tones.

The whip stopped in the air. The man turned a flushed, angry countenance on the intruder.

"What have you got to say about it?" he snarled, dropping the whip and reaching for his gun. "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm Jim Benton, known out this way as the Laramie Kid, and I like to see horses treated right, stranger. Better keep your hand free of that gun, because I've got a sort of a reputation for fast drawing."

"I don't give a damn who you are!" said the other, but his hand dropped to his side. "This horse belongs to me and I can do what I like with him. There isn't a law can stop me, either."

"Better be polite, stranger." The voice of the Laramie Kid ran smooth and low.

"Damn you, mind your own business! This is my horse."

"Out here in the West, there's no law except that carried in guns and fists."

"Do you know who *I* am?" demanded the other belligerently advancing a step. "I'm Judson Black, leader of that Mormon train back there, and I won't stand for any meddling."

"We aren't any better acquainted since you mention your name."

The face of Judson Black grew livid with rage.

"Look here, you!" he bellowed. "You had better be careful how you talk to me." He paused to lend greater effect to that which was to follow. "No doubt you've heard of the Danites—the Avenging Angels—if you've been out here long?"

"Yes, I've heard of them," replied the Laramie Kid, softly. "But I don't believe all I hear. I've got to *see* first."

"Well, I warn you to clear out quick, or you'll see and *feel.*"

This last proved too much for the Laramie Kid. A lightning spring and he had caught hold of the butt of the other's revolver. Before the astonished man could prevent him, he had jerked it free from its holster and flung it into the bushes. Quickly the revolvers of the Laramie Kid followed that of the Mormon, and he jumped back and squared off with his fists.

"Reckon now is the time to feel those 'Avenging Angels' of yours!" he drawled.

In an instant the two men had closed in deadly clinch, left hands at throats and rights pounding away at ribs. Although his opponent outweighed him by twenty pounds, the Laramie Kid, past master in the rough-and-tumble fighting of the plains, handled the heavier man as if he were a baby. It was soon over. With upturned face, puffed and bleeding, the horse whipper cried quits and staggered unsteadily to his feet.

"You win—*now*," he mouthed, gasping for air. "But look out—because we'll get you—in the end—you can't escape the Danites."

"I'm not running away when they come for me, stranger," replied the Laramie Kid, coolly slapping the dust of the prairie from his clothes. "But to return good for evil—as it says in our Scriptures—you'd better watch out for Indians. All the tribes are on the warpath against the whites, and from what I've seen of your handling of that train you'd be easy pickings for them. There are Indians all about you—right up on those rocks—and they're watching you now."

"We want none of your advice—and the Indians aren't rising. There isn't one about." The man climbed into the saddle, making no attempt to recover his revolver. "And as for you," he shouted in anger from a safe distance, "don't come near our train or we'll kill you on sight—and you haven't heard the last of *me*, either."

He wheeled about, dug his spurs into his horse and speeded back at a gallop to the advancing train.

"WAL," chuckled Mebbe Joe, "thet war a prime whalin' yuh give 'im, Laramie. Y'u're right plausible with yore fists."

The Kid cast a regretful glance at the oncoming column of wagons, the creaking noises from which could now be plainly heard on the dry air.

"Doesn't seem right to let them walk plumb into those Indians, Joe," he said.

"Yuh done warned 'em, ain't yuh. An' they wouldn't listen? It's thar fault, not your'n. Come on."

The warning given Judson Black by the Laramie Kid must have had some effect on him, because the train made a sudden left turn out into the open and went into the semblance of a defensive corral. The stream the two men had just quitted running through the rectangle of canvas-covered wagons. Shortly the red, flickering lights of camp-fires began to show in spots as the pioneers cooked their evening meal, in the deepening shades silhouetting the clumsy vehicles, black against the red. Shadowy forms flitted about in between the wagons. At the head of the train a fire which dwarfed the others in size attracted the attention of the two plainsmen. While they watched, the clarion notes of a bugle broke on the night air. It must have been the signal for conference, because immediately upon its last note men were seen to rise from their places about the family fires and wend their way to the larger one, where they squatted around in a circle.

When all had gathered, a man crossed from a wagon to the group and began haranguing the attentive listeners. It was too far and too dark for the men by the cliff to recognize him, but there was something familiar in the way he raised his arm and shook his fist. They judged that it was no other than Judson Black.

"And on top of that," said Mebbe Joe, "they ain't got out nary a guard, an' with all them fires lighted the Injuns could come right up tu arrer range without bein' seed."

The Laramie Kid remained silent, a worried frown clouding his clean-cut face.

"They're sure a bunch of damn fools. Think the Indians will attack when they break camp in the morning."

"Mebbe they will, an' mebbe they won't. If it war jest a rovin' band o' Crows now, I'd say yes, but the redskins is beginnin' tu use whut little brains they has, which is proved by all the tribes combinin'. As the train lays, some o' the whites might escape, so I don't reckin they'll attack in the mornin', but'll wait for another day's march or so. They'll let the train head wal into the west pass an' wipe 'em out there."

The Laramie Kid rose to his feet.

"I can't stand this, Joe! There are women and children out there and I can't see them murdered in cold blood."

"Whut yuh goin' tu do? It's out o' yore hands. Yuh tried an' they wouldn't listen none."

"Because one man refused to listen

doesn't mean that others will follow suit. There must be *some* level-headed men in that outfit."

"Yuh spoke tu thar leader, didn't yuh? War *he* level-headed?"

"I'm going over to that fire and make them listen to me."

"An' git shot fer yore pains? It's worth yore hide tu show in thet bunch."

"Can't help it, Joe. I'm going to take the chance."

"Of all the consarned blockheads!" ejaculated the scout in injured disgust. "Wal, mebbe I'm an old fool, but yuh ain't goin' alone."

He rose painfully to his feet. "Reckin arter all, wimmin an' childrun is some consarn o' ours. Step out, Laramie, I'm a-treadin on yore heels."

"Thanks, Joe, but I'm going alone." There was no denying the decision in the tones. "If they get me you can hike for California."

"Right yuh be, Laramie, an' without eatin' waggin dust, too."

## II

SOLEMNLY the two plainsmen parted. The Laramie Kid, rifle gripped and revolvers loosened in holsters, crept silently out into the night toward the distant council fire of the whites. When he had disappeared in the wall of blackness, Mebbe Joe followed in his wake.

Though he moved at a high rate of speed, not a sound issued from the swiftly falling feet of the Laramie Kid. Drawing within speaking distance, he recognized the voice of Judson Black. Then a dried stick snapped under his foot. He melted to the ground and lay still, listening, but the noise had gone unheard by those of the train. Judson Black, standing there before the fire, was addressing his subordinates with much waving of arms.

"We of the Chosen People must protect ourselves and families," he declared.

As he listened, the Laramie Kid instinctively felt a false ring to the speaker's words.

"We are persecuted and have been driven from place to place. Is it not so, brethren?" He stopped to glare about him as if defying an answer in the negative.

"Finally, our harassed brethren decided to cross the plains in search of peace and freedom, to find a spot to erect temples where they could worship unmolested. Thank God those brave pioneers succeeded. And now we are following in their footsteps—emulating their efforts. The Indians have felt our mighty arm and are scurrying westward. Not a hostile red man have we run into in our long, wearisome journey. The path lies open before us. The path to happiness, peace and prosperity. Nothing is to be feared from Indians. But now a deep and grave danger has arisen, and it comes not from savages, nor from unknown lands, but from white men not of our faith. I will not go further into the details of my encounter with the two unbelievers this afternoon, but it is sufficient to say that they set upon me in ambush and had it not been for the hard fight I put up against them, you would now have other than me to lead you into the Promised Land.

"I vote that on the morrow some of our best men be formed into a searching party and should they capture the two unbelievers, that we make an example of them. Their bodies hanging by the necks from a gibbet erected along the trail will serve as a warning to unbelievers not to molest those of the true faith. The matter is open to discussion."

There followed a shaking of heads around the ring. A gray-bearded man rose slowly to his feet and bowed his head to Judson Black as if asking permission to speak.

"Speak, Brother Williams," commanded the leader, a hostile note springing into his voice, as if warning him not to go against his words.

"THERE is some wisdom in what Brother Black says." The patriarch of the train spoke haltingly, as if fearing his superior. "But I disagree with him in part."

Judson Black's eyes flashed fire.

"I am an old man, past seventy, and haven't much longer to live. This is the first trip across the plains for Brother Black. I have made three. It has worried me because we have seen no sign of Indians. It is not natural on there part, for we are in their country and they resent our presence. Their inactivity presages but

one thing—they are assembling for an uprising.

"From what I hear of the two white men whom Brother Black asserts attacked him and tried to kill him, I recognize one as being Mebbe Joe Simpkins, a man who has no peer in plains-craft. The younger man is the Laramie Kid, who ranks a close second to his partner. There are no two men west of the Mississippi who are more feared and respected by the Indians than they. I counsel heeding their warning and going by the south pass, even if it does take us a bit out of our way."

The old man sat down amid a wagging of heads and whispered comments among the men. Instantly, upon a covert signal from Judson Black, a man of evil countenance and arrogant demeanor sprang to his feet.

"A year back," he said in loud, browbeating tones, "the counsel of Brother Williams would of been wise, but since then the Indians has been drove west, as stated by Brother Judson Black. I've heard of this Mebbe Joe and Laramie Kid. They're bad characters and are leaders among the persecutors of the Chosen People. The Laramie Kid comes from Ohio. He ain't unknown to a member of this train—a female."

A warning look was flashed from Judson Black to the speaker.

"I ain't goin' to tell her name. But it's plenty to say, that he advised her against acceptin' the true faith, and that they quarreled. He left for parts unknown and she now is the promised bride of one of our most distinguished members. No doubt, learning of her presence with us the Laramie Kid has set up a trap to get revenge on her and him of the true faith to who she's promised."

A murmur welled up from his hearers.

"Brother Black's advice is good. We've got many enemies. 'A eye for a eye and a tooth for a tooth' so says the Good Book. I vote on formin' the searching party as advised by Brother Black and bringin' them two men to the punishment they deserves. I don't think the party will do much, because this Laramie Kid is a coward and by now is miles away. I'd like to be one of them sent after him, and if I ever lay hands on him I promise—"

SUDDENLY, through a space between two men, a tall form stepped silently from the darkness and stood revealed in the glare of the fire. Judson Black's lower jaw dropped as he stared at the apparition, while the circle about him sat as if petrified, for the moment powerless to move or utter a sound. The boastful speaker froze.

"Making promises that can't be fulfilled is dangerous," said the Laramie Kid calmly, though his heart was throbbing wildly at what he had just heard.

"It isn't necessary to search for the Laramie Kid, because *I* am he. I've been listening to your talk and I'm not ashamed for eavesdropping, because I am here on a good purpose. Your Brother Williams talks sense, while the other two you have listened to are liars."

Judson Black clenched his fists and thrust his chin forward in the direction of the insult.

"Stay where you are, Black," commanded the Laramie Kid. "As I've told you before, I'm lightning with a gun."

He glanced about at the curious, troubled faces upturned to him. "This afternoon I gave Black here sound advice after I had whaled him some. Tonight I come to see if *you* will listen to me, because I don't like to have women and children murdered when it can be prevented by the use of a little horse sense. I am not of your faith, but I'm not against it. As for hanging Mebbe Joe and me alongside the trail—I'll pass up that joke with no hard feelings.

"The Indians have risen. If you keep on to the west pass you'll all be killed. You'll get fighting at the south pass, too, but there's more room there, and if you're careful, you can get through. The other way you haven't a chance.

"Here's my proposition to you. Mebbe Joe and I will guide the train through and well beyond the south pass. Then, when you people are safe, we'll leave you and you can go your way. What do you say? The lives of your women and children depend on this."

A man clambered to his feet. "Stranger," he asked, "just what is your religion?"

"I'm not much for religion as laid down by rules of church," answered the Laramie Kid. "I believe every man should *live* religion—not talk it."

"We cannot accept your proposition to guide us," interposed Judson Black quickly. "To keep one soul safe in our fold, to prevent the slightest wavering in the faith of the least among us, we would all willingly, nay gladly, lay down our lives and the lives of our women and children in sacrifice. Is it not true, brethren?"

From the hechmen of Judson Black dotted among the gathering about the fire issued in chorus a solemn "Amen."

"What right have you to decide for others?" demanded the Kid angrily. "If you want to give your life, well and good, but those of the women and children—No! Do you know what will happen if the redskins get you? Your women the wives of Indians. Your babies butchered. Ask the Indians their religion when they come among you with blood-dripping knives."

"Look here, Benton!" said Judson Black. "We do not believe you. There are no Indians. It is simply a scheme of yours to get in here."

The Laramie Kid turned his back on the Mormon leader and addressed the others.

"It is useless wasting time in argument about the presence of the Indians. They are all about you. If you had eyes you would have known it long ago. You haven't a single guard around the corral. They could kill you now where you sit. I came upon you without you knowing it. What then could redskins do? Let Joe and me guide you through safely and then we'll leave. I give you my word."

## III

UNKNOWN to the Laramie Kid, Judson Black slyly passed word to a man concealed in a wagon parked close in to the fire. Slowly and deliberately, barrel resting on tailboard, the muzzle of a long border rifle moved cautiously until it covered the heart of the plainsman standing in the firelight. A nervous finger twitched at the trigger, ready to pull.

Unconscious of the sword hanging over his head, the Laramie Kid went on.

"Will you accept that proposition? You are getting all for nothing?"

"I am commanding this train!" cried Judson Black fiercely. "We will accept no proposition from an unbeliever! You have insulted our faith, and you have insulted me. You shall be punished. Your life is forfeit."

He raised a hand on high, as if to lend force to his threat, but in reality it was the death signal to the hidden rifleman.

From the curtain of black beyond the flickering light of the fire rose a girl's warning scream, followed instantly by a whiz in the air and the crack of a rifle. The hat of the Laramie Kid spun round, a hole bored in its rim. Then a deep curse, punctuated by a groan of pain, and the body of the would-be assassin, transfixed by a feathered shaft, tumbled from the wagon into the firelight, a wildly threshing arm throwing up a cloud of sparks from the smoldering embers at the edge of the fire.

The Mormons sprang to their feet, hands reaching for revolvers, but upon sight of the Indian arrow half buried in their dying comrade, stood stock still for a moment, faces terrified. The sound of feet running from all directions, mixed with shouted questions, answers, and the wailing of freshly awakened children, came from the train.

Taking advantage of the confusion, the Laramie Kid leaped into the darkness, running back about fifty yards, where he stopped to listen.

A bugle sounded. Flames of fires leaped high as fresh fuel was thrown upon them. From wagons, here and there in the corral, rifles spoke their location betrayed by the flashes of the discharges. A bullet hit to the left of the Laramie Kid, mushroomed, ricochetted from the hard-dry ground, and sped toward the cliff in his rear with a moaning, wailing sigh.

"Ain't so safe dishin' out charity, Laramie." The caustic words were spoken in the guarded tones of Mebbe Joe. "Them Mormons is plumb careless with a rifle, so I got plumb careless with a arrer. Lucky I swiped thet Injun's artillery when I scalped him t'other day—come in right handy."

The younger plainsman stretched out a hand and gripped his partner by the shoulder in gratitude.

"Thanks, Joe," he said simply. "You were just in time."

"Hate like hell tu do it, but I callate we jest gotta save thet train. If I start now

I kin reach Fort Laramie by hard ridin' an' perhaps git a few o' the boys tu come back with me, but it'll take time. The Injuns is thick as fleas on a lazy dawg. You better stick 'round out o' sight, but close tu the waggin', so if the redskins jump 'em yuh kin hop in an' take charge." Just as Mebbe Joe was turning away he stopped and put his hand on the younger man's shoulder. "Is that the girl—the one they was talkin' about?"

"I reckon it is, Joe."

"Well, I'll ride special fast then. Reckin we might not see each other ag'in', Laramie, so we jest as well shake hands." The old scout paused, then again broke the embarrassing silence. "If I don't git through tu Fort Laramie an' somehow them durned waggins manages tu escape, tell thet gal o' your'n howdy fer me, an' say I reckin a kid called Joe, if it's thet kind o' a kid, won't hurt him none. So long, durn yer hide."

The heart of the younger man was too full for words, but Mebbe Joe understood. A hearty handshake and the old scout was gone on his perilous and almost hopeless mission. The Laramie Kid realized that neither of them had a chance in a thousand to save the train or themselves once the Indians opened up.

After awhile the excitement in the wagon train died down, but guards were posted and the fires were kept burning brightly. The Laramie Kid marveled at the ignorance and inexperience of the settlers, as he watched them crouch about the blazing fires, easy targets for Indian arrows. Gradually the men, one by one, turned in.

Growing restless and drawn by a longing to see the girl, the Laramie Kid crawled toward the silent group of white covered wagons. He found her sitting on the front seat of a wagon with her head pillowed in sleep, fully dressed. The blood rushed to his head and his senses swam. He felt like running to her and clasping her in his arms, but instead he tiptoed forward, hugging the shadows, and whispered in a voice broken with emotion:

"Grace! Grace! It's Jim."

The shapely hands folded in her lap moved slightly, but she gave no sign that she had heard. He pulled on the hem of her skirt. With a smothered gasp she stared about her in alarm, her eyes finally coming to rest on his upturned face.

"You—you?" she breathed.

He held a finger to his lips for silence and made a motion for her to enter the wagon. She caught his meaning and nodded. He made his way to the rear, and after a careful scrutiny of the vicinity, crawled in over the tailboard and drew the canvas together behind him. She was waiting for him, but there were no arms held out in joyous welcome. Instead her head was averted and she shrank back.

"Why have you come?" she asked wearily.

The blood froze in his veins. Was this the reception he had looked forward to for five long years, he asked himself bitterly.

"Why, Grace!" he said huskily. "Aren't you glad to see me?"

"You shouldn't have come, Jim. I was beginning to forget." She covered her face with her hands as if to shut out his vision. "If they find you here, Judson Black—knows of your presence, it means your death—I just can't—" Her voice broke and the tears rolled from between her fingers. "I can't stand any more."

"What have they done, Grace?" he demanded with heat. "What have they been doing to you?"

"Oh, don't, please don't. It all doesn't matter now. A year ago yes, but now—no!"

"Tell me, dear!"

A strong arm encircled her slim waist and drew her tight. At first she resisted, but soon leaned against the Laramie Kid as if too tired to fight further.

"It wasn't all your fault, Jim," she murmured. "I guess I was as much to blame as you. You were hot headed, Jim, and so was I. My guardian was a hard man and forebade me to see you. I was helpless. There was no one I could turn to. You asked me to marry you, but I was afraid to go against my guardian. You left me, Jim, when I needed you most. You should have stayed and fought by my side. My life is ruined and we could have been so happy together."

"I'm sorry, dear. I'll make it all up to you, if you'll only let me."

"It is too late now, Jim. Before my guardian died he introduced me to Judson Black and promised me to him in marriage.

I fought him off as best as I could, Jim, but I was alone. Everyone was against me. I tried to run away, but they caught me and brought me back."

"Who brought you back?"

"I don't know." Her voice dropped to a faint whisper and she glanced about her fearfully. "Three masked men. They took me before Judson Black. He was masked also and tried to disguise his voice, but I recognized him. I was condemned to death. The trial was a farce. The next day Judson Black called upon me in the house in which I was held prisoner and offered me my freedom in return for marrying him. I was too much of a coward to die, so I said yes."

"Are you married to him?"

"No—not yet, Jim."

"Then you never will be."

For a moment the girl tensed in his arms with hope, but then she went limp.

"It is hopeless, Jim, I *must* marry him. I am afraid not to."

"Why are you afraid?"

"Not so loud, Jim. There are eyes and ears everywhere about us. They watch me in the day, are with me at night. Always those ears are listening and those eyes are following me. If I wake at night—I see eyes peering in at me. They are here—there—everywhere—" Her voice ended in a smothered sob.

## V

SUDDENLY Jim stiffened. He had heard a slight noise on the canvas outside as if a fingernail had inadvertently scratched against it. He pressed his lips close to the ear of the girl.

"Someone is listening. Denounce me. Threaten to raise the alarm."

Refusal rose to her lips and she shook her head slowly.

"If you love me, do as I say," he whispered.

With face blanched with fear she inclined her head in assent.

"Will you change your faith or not?" he asked, pretending anger.

"I shall never change my faith." It was said bravely. Then in a voice too subdued for other than the Laramie Kid she added, "In you."

He squeezed her hand.

"The train is entering into a trap," he said. "If it goes by the West pass it will be wiped out by the Indians. Leave now with me and you will be saved from certain massacre. What if you are promised to marry a Mormon?"

"I shall remain true to my faith."

"All right, stay and take the consequences."

While talking, the Laramie Kid was quietly edging to the tailboard for a desperate dash. But suddenly the muzzles of three rifles were thrust into the wagon from the rear. Instantly realizing that resistance would be useless and fearing to use his revolver lest the return fire from the rifles should injure the girl, the cornered man glanced to the front of the wagon to see if that avenue were open. Two more rifles confronted him.

"Throw up your hands or we'll fire! Come out the back—quietly." It was Judson Black.

"Generally I go out the front door—but this time I'll oblige you by using the back," said the Laramie Kid.

"Well, I've got you," said Judson Black, thrusting his ugly face close up to that of the prisoner. "You'll feel the weight of my hand now."

"That's only fair—you felt the weight of mine yesterday.'

"Where you are going that fresh tongue of yours won't wag so freely."

"I reckon you won't be long behind," retorted the Laramie Kid. "The Indians will see to that."

"Put him in the wagon and guard him," commanded the Mormon leader. "We'll try him in the morning before the train moves."

THE Laramie Kid blinked in the strong light pouring into the wagon from the East. As best he could, owing to his arms being trussed, he scrambled out in the wake of his captor. Once on the ground he glanced about anxiously for a sight of Grace, but she was nowhere to be seen.

The smell of strong coffee and frying bacon wafted to him from the many fires. From the groups nearby, curious, furtive looks were cast in his direction, but if one of his guards happened to glance their way, eyes were hastily averted. It seemed to the Laramie Kid that the heavy hand of an

unknown fear had settled on the folk of the train, but not so with his captors. The Kid readily guessed, as if placards to the effect had hung on their breasts, that they were members of Judson Black's band. And each leering face he imprinted deeply on his memory.

He was led, two guards on each side of him and one behind, to a small space enclosed by wagons parked closely together a hundred yards or more away from the train. It was plain that his trial was to be secret. Reaching the squared wagons, squatted on the ground in a semi-circle, he counted twelve masked men, armed to the teeth, each holding a revolver ready for instant action.

"Good evening, *gentlemen!*" greeted the Kid sarcastically, as his guards tied him to one of the wagons.

There came no answer from behind the masks. From out the wagon opposite to that which he was tied, Judson Black, also masked, emerged and took station facing his lieutenants. There was no ceremony of saluting, just ominous silence. The leader of the train got right down to business.

"Members of the Circle of Death," he began in solemn tones. "The prisoner before you is James Benton, also known as the Laramie Kid. He is responsible for the death of one of our comrades. According to our laws," went on Judson Black, "the accused is granted the right of speech in his own behalf." He turned to the prisoner tied near him. "Speak, James Benton," he commanded.

"Get the farce over with," said the Laramie Kid contemptuously.

An angry stirring occurred among the masked men. Judson Black held up a silencing hand.

"It is the privilege of the accused to speak without interruption," he warned, a threatening note in his voice at the breach of discipline. "Though it is my duty to advise him that what he says may bring additional punishment upon him. There are worse things than death," he added significantly.

"Keep your advice," returned the Laramie Kid. "I need none of it. I have heard about the secret society called the Danites, or the Avenging Angels, and I want to say that I don't believe you are of that organization if there is such an organization. I suspect that you are just a gang of murderers and thieves posing as the Danites so that you can cloak your crimes. And don't think you can scare me. I have been tied to an Indian stake—and have escaped by the help of God and a few long bore rifles, and I'm not afraid of you. But if you are the Avenging Angels, I dare you to take me to Salt Lake and bring me to trial before the Elders of your church, and then we shall see who it is that'll go free—you or me."

A growl rose from the assembled men and one or two got to their feet. Even Judson Black was visibly affected by the scathing words. However, quickly mastering his agitation, the masked leader roared for silence.

"Beware of your words," he threatened. "Or you die instantly."

"That going to Utah business doesn't seem to tickle your palates?" went on the Laramie Kid. "I've said my say in regard to you all. But there's a certain girl in this train—you know who she is—if harm comes to her at your hands, even though you put me to death, you can't escape punishment. My partner is a free man and knows all about her. He will rally every plainsman, far and wide, to avenge her. And your whole tribe hasn't a chance when our boys see red.

"Now to get back to my first reason for coming into your sociable and hospitable presence—Indians. Personally I would enjoy seeing your hair hanging from Indian belts—but you have innocent women and children with you. They shouldn't be allowed to die through your stupidity. You say there are no Indians about. Well, then, just look back over your shoulders at that cliff."

## IV

THE men cast startled glances in the direction indicated by their captive. A thin ribbon of smoke was climbing through the still air. As they looked, a small ball of smoke, like a toy balloon, shot up, broke, and slowly dispersed.

"That's Crow talk," explained the Kid. "It signifies an enemy—meaning you—is in the country."

"It's a lie," said Black. "It's a trick of

his partner, that thieving Mebbe Joe."

"A man can be in only one place at a time—isn't that true?" said the Kid. "Well, just wait a minute. Look to the east—behind your train. Three signals—miles apart. That means you are cut off in the rear. I suppose Mebbe Joe fired *those* two."

Necks craned toward the new menace.

"Now look straight ahead to the west—over the west pass—do you see any smoke signals there?"

"No—none there at all," broke joyously from a man in the circle.

"All right, look at them over the south pass. Count them. One—two—five—seven in all. There go three more over the cliff to the north. What is the answer?"

"The Indians have risen," grudgingly admitted Judson Black. "But the answer is easy and you are convicted by your own words. Last night you advised this train to take the south pass—knowing that the Indians were strongest there as is now shown by their signals—see, there are now nine signals from that direction. There are no Indians in the west pass—not a signal can be seen."

"You damn fool!" said the Laramie Kid in disgust. "Can't you see what the redskins are after? Purposely they have showed no signals in the west pass to entice you to go by that way. Their ruse would never get by with a plainsman, but they know you are ignorant as hell."

From the train behind them sounded startled exclamations as the rest of the settlers with faces turned to the sky, pointed and gesticulated at the rising spirals of white smoke.

"We have business in hand," commanded Judson Black hurriedly. "Members of the Circle of Death, you have heard the charges against the two men. The first to receive sentence is Joseph Simpkins. What is your vote?"

"Death!" burst in chorus from the now plainly worried men.

"And that of James Benton, the Laramie Kid.

As one, the semi-circle rose to their feet and brought their heads together in consultation, Judson Black in the center. It appeared to the Laramie Kid that Judson Black was propounding some scheme to them. Evidently it met with ready approval, because with sly, approving winks among themselves, they again sat down. Their leader turned upon the prisoner.

"The Circle of Death, in its mercy, has decided, James Benton," he said, "to accept your advice. Even though we do not trust you in other things, still your craft of the plains is well known. Your sentence has been held in abeyance. You are to be spared, though your hands are to remain tied, and two guards will be constantly with you under orders to shoot if you should make a break to desert the train. If, by your guidance, the train should successfully resist the impending Indian attack and get safely through into Utah, we shall, as you have asked the Circle, bring you to trial before the Elders of the church. If you refuse to accept our terms you shall be put to death, here and now."

The Laramie Kid laughed ironically.

"And what guarantee have I," he asked, "that you will fulfill the terms?"

"Our sacred word."

"That's a joke."

He wasn't fooled either by their promise to give him a trial in Utah, knowing well that as soon as they were out of danger they would put him to death.

"All right, I accept," he said. "But on this condition—I won't give *my* word to go along with you after we get through, because I might want to change my mind, and when I give my word I somehow manage to keep it—and that might prove uncomfortable to me under the circumstances."

QUICKLY followed another conference, upon the conclusion of which Judson Black turned to him.

"You shall take charge as we have outlined, and your word is not necessary."

"Then I am now captain of the train?" asked the Laramie Kid in a businesslike manner. "And such orders as I give will be obeyed?"

"Yes."

"Turn me loose from this wagon, then. A captain spread-eagled on a wagon wheel doesn't look nice."

Quickly he was untied, masks were taken off and hidden away in pockets. Those whom but a minute before had been his judges, now stood about him awaiting his first order.

"Back to the train with you and assemble the men, and the women and children as well, for a council of war," commanded the Kid. "Notify Williams, the gray haired man who spoke in council last night, that I wish to talk to him. He knows more than all of you put together.

"Wait a minute," he ordered as the circle around him broke up to do his bidding. "To save time you can sound that tin horn of yours that makes so much noise when it ought to be silent. The redskins won't think it unusual to see us go into conference after the lighting of those signal fires. In fact, if we didn't gather now it would look suspicious to them."

Soon a sea of worried faces, other than those belonging to the Circle of Death, collected around the Laramie Kid. On the outer edge of the large gathering he glimpsed the pale face of Grace, a man standing on each side of her. Her eyes sought his despairingly. He waved to her.

"Good folks," began the Laramie Kid, a note of irony in his voice. "After being the guest of your leader there, Judson Black, for a few hours, it was determined in secret conference that on account of the little experience I have gained in Indian warfare, that I am to be your captain until the train safely runs the gauntlet of the red men."

There sounded a hum of approval from his listeners, followed by a brightening of faces which did not please Judson Black any too well.

"A hazardous task lies before us. There is danger—real danger—and can only be met by the fullest co-operation of all in the train, and by an unhesitating and unquestioning obedience of my orders. Mr. Williams is experienced in the ways of the plains. I appoint him my lieutenant. The part of the women and children is very important. It is my intention to try and repulse the first attacks of the Indians so severely that they will turn their offensive into a siege. Time is the only thing that can save us—to hold out for possible relief."

The Laramie Kid refrained, for obvious reasons concerning his own safety, from mentioning the fact that right then Mebbe Joe, if he had successfully passed through the Indian lines, was riding hard to Fort Laramie for succor.

"This is how the women and children can help," he continued. "Water is a vital factor in a siege on the plains. Immediately after the conference breaks up every available receptacle must be filled at the creek crossing in your midst. The women and children will attend to that. There must be no waste of water. It must be used only for drinking, and very little for cooking. Now, for all of you. Everyone is to be on short rations. Drink your fill at the creek before we move.

"Food is the next factor. Use it sparingly and waste not a particle. Overhaul all rifles and revolvers. Husband your ammunition, and there must be no promiscuous firing in case of an attack. No one is to fire until the order is passed down the line from me. I'll wait until the redskins get close in. Let them come within seventy-five yards. The men must be divided, without regard to families, so that each outside wagon is equally protected and there will be no weak gaps in the line. Once the Indians break through in a spot, we are finished.

"Now go quietly to your tasks and let there be no excited running about. Keep your head at all times. Do you understand?"

The people dispersed quietly. The Laramie Kid then gathered about him the older men of the train.

"When we move," he said, "we will gradually draw into attack formation, the barricaded wagons taking the outside. The train will be closed at front and rear, bulging outward at the sides."

With the toe of his moccasin he drew a diagram on the ground illustrating the movement.

"In case the Indians show themselves, I will have the bugle sounded to go into corral. There must be no opening in the line. Judson Black and I will take the head of the column with Williams in command at the rear. When we move I'll head in the direction of the west pass and—"

"But you said the west pass was sure death," objected Judson Black suspiciously.

"It is. But we are not supposed to know it. I am fighting for time. If the Indians see us heading right into their trap they will wait. If we head for the south pass now they will immediately become suspicious and probably attack. We'll keep

on toward the west pass and then we'll suddenly change our course and make for the south pass. The Indians will be at a loss for their next move and will have to call a council of war. That takes time."

TWO hours had slipped by and the sun was well up in the heavens before the head of the long column received word from Williams in the rear that all instructions had been complied with and that the train was ready to move forward.

At sound of the bugle whips cracked, horses and oxen strained forward and soon the creaking of dried-out wood and the crunching of wheels filled the air. Slowly but surely, the train formed itself into an ellipse and crept onward slowly.

It was after midday when the west pass loomed up ahead of the noisily creaking cavalcade moving along under the mercilessly scorching sun. Too dangerously near for comfort growled some of the still suspicious Mormons, but the Laramie Kid paid no heed and kept on. He had his turning point south figured to a nicety. Accustomed as he was to measuring distance in the thin clear air of the plains, he knew that the jagged rocks lining the sides of the Indian ambush ahead were, in reality, much farther away than they appeared to the casual, untrained eye.

Another hour sped by. Then the Laramie Kid gave the order to turn. The cliffs and rocks, now on their right front, seemed so bare and devoid of life that many in the train doubted the wisdom of the move, but vouchsafed no protest to the man in charge. By four o'clock the wagons were well out into the plain in the new direction.

A short distance from a small creek of pure fresh water, which the Laramie Kid had noted miles back by its fringe of green, he called a halt and gave the order to go into corral for the night. He cared little now that the Indians knew an experienced hand was at the helm, for the turning to the south had betrayed that to them. In a compact circle the wagons presented a formidable front.

The night passed without alarm and dawn arrived. The Laramie Kid, after a careful inspection decided to move on. Accordingly he ordered the bugle to sound, and the march was resumed.

As the train grew nearer to the pass, the Laramie Kid searched out every nook and cranny, but without result. However, a half hour later, he caught a glimpse of a feathered headdress as it disappeared behind a rock. Quietly he passed the word back to be prepared to go into instant corral. A few minutes elapsed, then suddenly, as if a dam had burst farther up in the pass, a rushing tumbling torrent of half naked men and semi-wild horses poured out toward them. Reaching the open plain the galloping horsemen spread out into a constantly widening circle.

"Corral! Corral! Into corral!" shouted the Laramie Kid, his voice backed up by the bellowing of the bugle.

## V

INSTANTLY confusion reigned in the train. Men cursed and women screamed. Horses reared on their haunches and fouled themselves in harness. Even the usually stolid oxen became almost unmanageable. The manœuver which had been so well executed but the day before, now that it was needed, became a twisting, tangled mass of excited humans and loco animals.

The Laramie Kid darted into the midst of the train and presently brought a semblance of order out of the chaos. Eventually the animals were outspanned, and wagon tongues touched tailboards in an irregular, unshapely circle.

A seemingly never ending stream of redmen issued from the pass, re-enforcing the rapidly growing, revolving ring of grotesquely painted savages already on the plain. Orders forgotten, several shots were fired from the parked wagons, the bullets harmlessly kicking up dirt far out of range of the Indians. The Laramie Kid swore roundly in disgust and yelped orders to the offenders to stop shooting instantly.

At the point at which most probably the attack would first be directed, the Laramie Kid took his stand, anxiety growing in his heart at the hundreds of braves crowding out onto the plain. It would be a tougher fight than he had at first anticipated. As he watched he picked out the different tribes.

According to their wont, the Crows, faces painted a hideous black and looking like fiends freshly shot from hell, were in the van, guiding the head of the galloping

line as it stretched out gradually in the distance, curving slightly inward until eventually it would surround the white covered wagons. Like a huge snake it began coiling itself about its intended victims. There also were the Sioux, brandishing weapons in the air, braves sitting barebacked horses as if they were a part of them. And Bannacks and Cheyennes, and a dotting of Arapahoes. Clannish they were, sticking together, but all with the same intent, the murder of the white despoilers of their lands.

The circle narrowed, but under the watchful eye of the Laramie Kid the settlers withheld their fire. Inward ventured the Crows, the others following nose against tail, until the men and women crouched in the wagon park could almost distinguish the painted markings of their faces. Like a fire-spitting pinwheel at a fireworks display the red warriors edged in, and still the white leader held back the command to fire.

A thousand yards away—nine hundred—eight—seven—six—and then five—the more or less accurate range of the border rifle of that period—four—three—the settlers were plainly fidgeting, the braves astonished. After all, must have been their thought, the pale faces were frozen with fear at the mighty front of the combined nations. Blood had turned to water in their veins. It would be a hollow victory, though many scalps were there for the taking.

Closer in they came, now grown reckless by the silence of the white men. Unconsciously they were riding into the bloody trap of the plainsman. Arrows began to describe high arcs in the air, only to fall aimlessly out of reach of the wagons. Still farther in rode the painted ring. The train was surrounded. Derisive war cries and exultant whoops rent the air, mixing with the noise of thudding hoofs on hard earth.

THEN it was that the Laramie Kid raised in his stirrups and signaled to the bugler. A single brassy, long-drawn note rose above the din of the warriors. From every wagon, between spokes, over tailboards, from front seats and from rents in canvas, blazed the death blast, a pall of white powder smoke with its acrid smell rising in the still air above the belching, flame spewing muzzles.

Braves pitched from their horses head first to the ground, killed instantly. Others, wounded, clutched wildly at their horses' necks, held on for a short period, or missing altogether struck the ground and rolled over and over, clawing frantically at the dirt. Death cries, defiant war whoops and a mad, confused shouting greeted the first volley. Horses stumbled and fell, some trying to rise, others kicking madly in the air, while many, minus their red riders, galloped aimlessly about, finally to head for the pass from which they had so recently come. A cloud of arrows sang through the air, the *zhut! zhut!* of their impact against the barricaded vehicles warning the settlers to hug cover. A rousing cheer rose from the wagon park at the success of the strategy of their leader.

Though momentarily checked and thrown into confusion by the destructive volley of their white enemies, the Indians refused to give ground. Quickly others filled the gaps in their line and came in nearer. Arrows rose high in the air and fell within the enclosure, one or two finding yielding flesh. The wagons nearest the pass began to look like monstrous half-plucked birds, feathered shafts standing out on them like huge pin feathers. Rifles cracked continuously, taking their toll of lives.

When it seemed that a hopeless, hand-to-hand encounter would ensue, the morale of the redmen suddenly caved in. Nerve gone, they turned tail, riding out of rifle range. The plain was strewn with dead and dying.

But they soon got their second wind. Urged on from behind by constantly arriving re-enforcements, with devilish-out-cries they came strongly on again, this time their attack directed at the head of the column.

The Laramie Kid had guessed their intent. He had drafted men from the other parts of the train to meet the onslaught. Again and again the Indians were met with withering rifle fire. It was soon over. They broke and dashed back helter-skelter to saftey, leaving behind a gruesome toll. The Laramie Kid knew the fighting was finished for the day. The different tribes sullenly withdrew to the mouth of the pass to hold council of war and to wait

for darkness to bring in their dead and wounded.

The Laramie Kid passed among the command taking stock of the casualties. Four men, two women, and a child had been killed outright by arrows, while nine others had been wounded, two of whom would not recover. He saw Grace bandaging the shoulder of a rifleman. Unable to resist temptation he passed close to her and was rewarded by a quick, fond look.

Heart singing with joy, the happy man, despite the pain in his tightly bound wrists, whistled merrily, much to the amazement of his two guards.

When the day grew short and the shades of night began to envelop the train, the Laramie Kid put out two cordons of sentinels, on hour shifts. Darkness brought silence, except now and then a moan from some wounded brave out on the plain was borne to them on the light breeze which had risen with the setting of the sun. Constantly throughout the night flaming arrows rose into the air from the cliffs ahead as tribe signaled tribe.

AT dawn the Indians attacked again and were repulsed, but the casualties received within the train had grown to an alarming degree. But a greater danger now menaced them. Disregarding the orders of the day before, the wagon train had drunk freely of water, until barely enough remained to carry them through another twenty-four hours. And there was no remedy because the creek now lay far to the rear.

True to the prediction of the Laramie Kid the Indians held council and decided to conduct a siege of the train. Out there beyond range the majority of them gathered, waiting like vultures. The wagon park was completely surrounded by a ring of stolid red men. Solitary horsemen galloped about. Occasionally a rider, to show his daring in the eyes of the assembled tribes, ventured close in to discharge an arrow, but usually paid for his foolhardiness with his life.

The pain in his wrists became so unbearable that the Laramie Kid refused to stay in command unless they were untied. Judson Black stoutly objected, but the majority of the Mormons, their fear of their leader's power dwarfed by that of the Indians, demanded that the request be granted, and finally carried their point. It took almost an hour of massaging before the blood again circulated freely in the released man's veins. Sensing that he had grown to be very popular with those not under the domination of Judson Black or the members of his gang, the Laramie Kid entertained no fears that when the occasion demanded, he could soon be rid of the two guards detailed to watch him.

By nightfall the lack of water began to be acutely felt. The lips of the men started to crack and bleed and tongues became swollen. As yet the children had not been cut down in their supply, the Laramie Kid realizing that nothing could break down the morale of the elders quicker than having suffering little ones about. Once, while making his rounds, he came upon Judson Black hidden in a wagon quaffing his fill from a secreted water bottle. Jerking the bottle from his lips, the Kid turned it into the general store, with a warning that if any man were found drinking more than his allotted ration, he would be shot on sight.

The night dragged painfully by without incident, the Indians being content to wait until their enemies should be defeated by thirst or starvation. Again the sun rose, its burning rays beating down mercilessly upon the canvas of the wagons, until the air grew stifling. By nightfall again the last of the water was gone. Through the dark, dreary hours children moaned and cried, curses mingled with prayers, and women stared piteously at their menfolk, beseeching them with their eyes.

## VI

THE next day's sun rose on a helpless company. Had the Indians only known it, they could have walked almost unhindered into the corral and finished their work. Of more seasoned mettle than the rest, the Laramie Kid bore up under the terrific strain and outwardly gave little evidence of his physical suffering. To his eyes, Judson Black and about a dozen of his men seemed not affected at all, though they constantly complained of the agony they were enduring. The Laramie Kid guessed that they had a secret cache of water somewhere in the train.

By high noon, the Indians in rear of the train had gradually withdrawn, joining those assembled before the pass. The Laramie Kid sensing that it was the beginning of the end, prepared as best he could, for an attack from that quarter. Jealous of each other, the different tribes were crowding in for the leadership, afraid that their share of scalps and booty would slip through their fingers into the hands of rivals.

Calling those about him that were able to respond, the Laramie Kid told the hollow-eyed, spent men that their only chance was to drive back the impending attack. Then it was, to keep up their courage, that he informed them of Mebbe Joe's mission, saying that if they could only hold out until the morrow they would be saved. Feverish eyes grew brighter at the glad tidings. Many sank to the knees in prayer. But in the heart of their leader it was but a forlorn hope. Mebbe Joe and his men were long overdue. There was no doubt in his mind that his partner had lost his life in his perilous attempt to break through the Indian lines for help. Now nothing was left but to show the redskins how white men could die.

On came the Indians in a headlong rush. Summoning every ounce of reserve energy, the settlers braced themselves for the shock. Rifles cracked and warriors tumbled into the sage brush, but like an irresistible tidal wave they rolled closer. The front rank of screeching tribesmen had almost reached the hubs of the wheels, when they broke in face of the destructive fire, wheeled about and retreated, only to begin reforming for a new attack.

The Laramie Kid knew it would be the end. His weakened force could not withstand such another rush. He had done his duty by the train. Now he must go down fighting by the side of Grace. It would never do to let her fall into the hands of the savages alive. No knife thrust would be her share—a worse fate in the tepee of some Indian Chief awaited her. His lips tightened grimly as his hand sought the butt of the revolver returned to him by the grateful Mormons. As he stood hesitant at the awful task before him, he was interrupted in his thoughts by a messenger from the rear of the column. Face pinched and haggard, eyes burning like coals in his head, the man staggered to him and caught him weakly by the arm, muttering from between lips puffed and bleeding.

"Judson Black—and ten others—deserted from—rear of train—murdered Williams and shot—me—Grace Denister with —them—I—"

He collapsed to the ground, dead, a stream of blood painting crimson his woolen shirt. For a second the Laramie Kid felt the earth sway under him, but quickly recovered his wits. He saw it now clearly enough, saw through the whole scheme of Judson Black—saw it when it was too late. After the repulse of the attack Black's men one by one had withdrawn, and he had thought nothing of it at the time presuming that they had gone for ammunition. What should he do? His course of action was decided for him.

A hoarse shout from a lookout warned him that the Indians were upon them again. Grasping the rifle of the dead man at his feet and slipping the bullet pouch and powder horn around his shoulder, he sprang to the hopeless defense. He looked about him. Fourteen men and a few women to resist the attack of hundreds. The rest were either dead or dying from thirst and wounds, scattered somewhere back there among the wagons and putrefying carcasses of horses and oxen.

On came the savages. Rifles cracked. A brave fell backward from his horse. A new rifle was thrust into his ready hand by a grim-faced, powder-smeared woman. He sighted quickly, pulled the trigger. A death screech rewarded his marksmanship. Another rifle into his hand—mechanically he aimed and pressed trigger. A feather bedecked Sioux Chief clutched the empty air, hit the ground on his side and lay still.

About him cracked other rifles but the reports were few and far between, and the Indians drew nearer. He set his lips, and with a mumbled prayer, reached for a fresh rifle. The screeching horde of blood crazed demons seemed to rise from the ground about him.

THEN, above the whoops of the savages sounded the distant cracking of border rifles. The Laramie Kid thought he had gone suddenly mad and blinked his eyes as he gazed spellbound. Across the plain at a neck-breaking gallop, reins

stretched over their horses' heads at arm's length and bodies leaning forward, raced a troop of plainsmen, a hundred strong, Mebbe Joe far in the lead. They fired as they rode, brave after brave hitting the ground. Emitting a chorus of dismayed yelps, the tribesmen wheeled about and made for the shelter of the pass, the wagon park forgotten.

The oncoming plainsmen split into two sections, the larger of the two pursuing the fleeing Indians while the smaller came towards the train. Feeble shouts of joy, intermingled with tears and hysterical laughter rose from the survivors in the wagon train. A retreating brave in a last defiance, loosed an arrow high into the air towards the huddled wagons, then bent over his horse's neck and turned tail. Down came the barbed shaft and buried itself deep in the shoulder of the Laramie Kid. A stifled sigh broke from his lips and he slowly crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

When he opened his eyes again, a water bottle was pressed tight against his lips, his body supported by the strong arm of Mebbe Joe.

"Reckin we won't go tu Californy arter thet gold, Laramie," he said. "Leastways until thet pesky arrer wound closes up." He jerked his head over his shoulder. "By the signs looks like yuh done had right smart o' a fight."

"Joe—thanks!" muttered the wounded man weakly. "But Grace—the girl—Judson Black has got her—he deserted to—the rear— Get them—quick— Save her —Joe."

"Now don't git all het up over a skirt, Laramie. We done run acrost that gang close in tu the cliff. Judson Black an' the rest o' them got clear, but we got the gal. Only we war in a hurry, havin' a pressin' app'intment with yuh an' a few durned waggins, we'd 'a got the thievin' desarters. They ain't seen the last o' us, though. Reckin afore nightfall me an' yuh an' the gal, an' a few o' the boys, will be on our way tu Fort Laramie. Thar be a right smart preacher thar now. He'd a come along but he war too drunk tu ride when we left, an' we didn't have no time tu wait fer churchmen tu sober up, seein' as how our business war urgint."

"Thank God!" murmured the Laramie Kid. "But the Indians, Joe?" he asked weakly.

"Reckin as how they done got their belly full o' fightin', 'Laramie'. Our boys ain't through with 'em yet. Thar's another bunch o' us waitin' at the other end o' thet south pass fer 'em tu show. An' then hell's a-goin' tu turn loose, 'cause the boys is tolerable fretful arter thar hard ride."

The plainsmen soon drove the Indians to cover, regardless of the difference in numbers. The broken Mormon train thankfully accepted the guidance and protection of their rescuers to Fort Laramie, where they could recuperate and refit for the remainder of their weary journey.

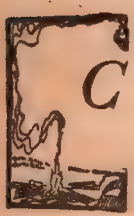
Resting in a wagon, with Grace sitting beside him, holding his hand, the Laramie Kid soon forgot the pain of his wound and the rough jolting. Mebbe Joe rode in the rear of the wagon, peering over his horse's head at the happy couple, a frown on his face.

"Don't know why I'm trailin' yuh an' eatin' the dust from yore waggin, Laramie," he growled. "But here I be a-follow'in' pesky waggin tracks. Reckin' I'll git me a woman, too, an' settle down. It's a-gittin' plumb monotonous out here on the plains."

# Wild Bill

THE YOUNG BILL HICKOK

**Only once did Wild Bill Hickok turn heel and run from hammering lead. No man doubted his courage. A reckless few questioned his gun speed, tried to beat that lightning draw—the West's surest shortcut to Boot Hill.**



*CRACK!* Another shot. And another miss. Wild Bill Hickok laughed. But General Jim Lane of the Kansas Red Legs didn't laugh. He scowled. And so did Shanghai Bill.

"See here, young man," said Jim Lane, "we came out here to practice. You followed us. But all you do is stand on the sidelines of our targets and laugh. Now what's your reason?"

James Butler Hickok, popularly known as Wild Bill, ceased laughing and jerked his thumb toward Shanghai Bill. "I reckon he's your best shot," he said quietly, "but I can't say much for his shootin'. Still, you took him on as a Red Leg, to fight the rebs, and refused to take me. But I can beat him and all the rest of your 300—with rifle, shotgun or pistol. That's what I'm laughin' about, General."

"But you have no equipment," Lane objected. "And, besides, you're only a boy."

Wild Bill, tall, lithe, bright-eyed and determined, stepped close to Jim Lane. He said quickly: "General, I've been a man since I was twelve. I can fight as good as any man here. Lemme shoot at them argets. If I don't hit 'em plumb center, and beat every other man shootin', I'll eat that crow. Or, is it a buzzard?'

Jim Lane looked up. "Buzzard," he said shortly, "and now I suppose you want to back down?"

"No, sir," said Wild Bill. "Buzzard or crow, my proposition stands. But if I win, I want a horse and some heavy pistols. Then I'm goin' along with you to fight them Missouri rebs. Is it a go, General Jim?"

General Lane flushed. "Let this boy shoot," he commanded, "and if he misses, somebody take a ramrod and run him off

our range. Shanghai, you better attend to that."

"Shore will," muttered this shaggy desperado, "and I'll just git out my ramrod now and have it ready."

But Wild Bill laughed again. "You

# Hickok—Frontiersman

By TOM LEWIS

won't need that for me," he said softly, "but you better keep it yourself in case you meet Quantrill. Maybe you could hit him with a ramrod. I know you can't do it with a rifle. Now watch."

"Bah!" Shanghai Bill spat at him. "Better wait till I kill that buzzard. You're goin' to eat it."

WILD BILL'S long-barreled rifle barked. *Ping!* Straight to the bull's eye sang his first bullet.

"Perfect!" said Jim Lane. "If that wasn't an accident it wins you a horse in my command. Now, take this pistol and see if you can win yourself a saddle and bridle."

Shanghai Bill muttered: "He can't do 'er. Lucky, that's all."

Wild Bill smiled and then threw down on the target. *Bang . . . Bang . . . Bang.* Three shots—dead center. "Call that luck?" he challenged. "Well, there's the saddle and bridle, General. What next?"

Jim Lane's eyes were sparkling. "One hundred dollars cash. Provided you hit a moving object."

They ran out a small round piece of wood and started it rolling like a hoop.

"Now hit that with a rifle," Lane ordered, "and I'll give you three shots to hit it center."

Just as Wild Bill started to shoot, a shadow flickered across the range. "That buzzard." His rifle flicked up. *Bang!* The bird fell at the feet of Shanghai Bill. "There's your chicken. Now lemme your gun." He seized Shanghai's rifle, fired rapidly, and crashed a bullet through the center of the wooden target rolling away

from him at one hundred yards. "Call that luck, Shanghai?"

"That," said Jim Lane, "is the best shooting I've ever seen in Kansas. Now you're a sharpshooter in the Kansas Red Legs."

But Wild Bill didn't accept the $100. "Just gimme a pair of good pistols, General, and use the money to buy ammunition for all of us. We're goin' to need plenty of powder and lead before this border fightin' is over."

Thus Jim Hickok enlisted, at Leavenworth, Kansas. And thus began, during the red months of border warfare, a campaign of killing which hovered over Wild Bill Hickok for more than twenty years.

James Butler Hickok, born in humble surroundings in 1837, became an outstanding figure in Western life before he was thirty. He literally blazed his way through a dozen States and Territories, from Texas to Wyoming and the Dakotas. As a pistoleer he was the king bee of the open range. He lived by the pistol and died by the pistol.

Many things have been said, for and against the old long-haired Marshal of Abilene, and much that has been written is palpably untrue. Yet I don't suppose there is any doubt about Jim Hickok's superb marksmanship. Here he stood in a class by himself. It would be difficult to deny him this distinction.

Just to settle the point in my own mind, I asked four great figures—Wyatt Earp, Bat Masterson, Charlie Siringo and Billy Tilghman—to name the Old West's greatest shots. All answered without reservation:

"Wild Bill Hickok."

TWO men, their muscles tensed, sat glaring at each other in a smoky barroom. The scene, Springfield, Mo.—the time, just after the close of the Civil War—the men, Wild Bill Hickok and Dave Tutt. The men had quarreled. There was murder in Tutt's dark eyes. Twin hells lurked in the cold, clear depths of Wild Bill's blue-gray eyes.

Soon these men would fight a duel to the death. Tutt, an unswerving Confederate, hated Hickok, an ardent Unionist, who had ridden through blood and fire to espouse the Northern cause. Men of Springfield said Tutt had come all the way from Yellville, Ark., just to kill Wild Bill.

The rivals had been playing poker and Tutt claimed he had won Wild Bill's watch. Bill said not. But the watch was lying on the table. Tutt picked it up. He snarled:

"You owe me thirty-five dollars. I'll keep this watch overnight. If you want it again, get the money and meet me in the public square. I'll be wearing your watch when I walk across the square. That'll be at nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

Wild Bill felt that his honor had been outraged. He said grimly: "You'll never cross that square wearing my watch. Not unless dead men can walk."

Tutt's hand crept toward a Colt .44. Wild Bill's thin lips curled. But he made no move, said nothing. Then Tutt shoved back his chair and backed toward the door. As he left, Tutt flung his final insult: "At nine—in front of the courthouse." Wild Bill watched him till he backed out of range of those cold, unblinking eyes. Then he said: "Drink up, boys. The next is on me. It may be the last one we'll have together."

It was three minutes before nine. Dave Tutt, wearing his gun, stepped out into the courthouse square and glanced at Wild Bill's watch.

Men were huddled in doorways all around the square. They were waiting, anxiously watching for Bill Hickok. But Wild Bill was not visible.

Again Tutt looked at the watch. A minute passed. It dragged like an hour. There was a faint sneer on Tutt's face.

Then, just at nine, a tall, sinewy figure appeared. It was Wild Bill. He had come to keep his appointment with death.

HICKOK glanced sharply at Tutt. He threw a swift glance toward a number of Tutt's friends, banked behind him. Someone yelled:

"Go on, Tutt. Pack his watch across the square."

Tutt started, moving slowly, but in a moment he saw the threat of death in Hickok's unwavering eyes. Then Tutt went for his gun.

Like a streak of lightning, Wild Bill's Colt was out, a blazing answer to Dave Tutt's challenge. Tutt fired one shot, staggered back as if someone had shoved him,

then fell dead with a bullet in his heart.

Wild Bill was untouched. Now he swung his gun in a threatening arc. To Tutt's friends he barked: "Keep out, men. This ain't your fight. He brought it on himself and, as you could see, my shot was fair enough. Now I'll call on the Justice."

The Justice, having witnessed the duel, held that the incident was closed. But Tutt's friends insisted on a jury trial. They got it. And Bill was speedily exonerated.

"Tutt," remarked a juror, "was monkeying with chain lightning. He should have known Bill Hickok. This man has killed more individuals than Tutt could count."

Of course, this wasn't strictly true, nevertheless, Bill had killed his share serving under Jim Lane and as a Federal spy. Tradition has it that he killed thirty-five men during one flaming siege as a sharpshooter.

And now he had demonstrated that it was decidedly unhealthy for rash men like Tutt to try to beat him to the draw. Few could do this.

His speed, as both Bat Masterson and Wyatt Earp described it to me, was amazing. It bordered on the unbelievable.

Hickok demonstrated his gun-prowess time and again. He proved it as government spy, as Indian scout, as Overland express guard, as pony express rider, as cow-town marshal, guide, gambler and as a plain citizen of the republic.

He ranged from Illinois to Texas, and from Texas to the Black Hills of Dakota. And wherever he roamed there was spitting death and two-gun destruction. It just didn't pay to trifle with him.

AS an aftermath of the Civil War, and marking the coming of the cattle era, helldorado towns such as Hays City and Abilene, Kansas, sprang up like mushrooms in an unplowed field. And here flocked the badmen.

It was inevitable that Wild Bill Hickok should operate in the exact center of these lurid surroundings. Wherever there was excitement and gunplay along the blazing frontier Bill was always at home.

He was chosen marshal of Hays City, a tempestuous cattle town not far from Fort Hays, where there were plenty of hell-raising soldiers with Sheridan's Seventh Cavalry. Bill's orders from the city fathers were short and to the point: "Make 'em behave—soldiers and cow-punchers alike. There's been too much hell-raising in Hays."

Then Wild Bill, now a picturesque figure with long brown hair and a pair of steady eyes that men had learned to fear, posted a notice in Hays City:

"Drink all you want but take off your guns while you're in this man's town."

The first man to disregard this grim warning was Jack Strawhan. Strawhan was hard, a tight-lipped killer from Texas. He snarled: "Take 'em off, huh? Well, I reckon not. I've seen this Hickok. I tangled with him in Ellsworth. And I made him like it."

Many men, including John Wesley (Wes) Hardin of Texas, boasted that they had made Wild Bill "like it." But not many of these, Hardin not excepted, were able to prove it. Hickok, whatever his faults, did not do much running away when the action grew hot. He was usually busy running into it. As Jack Strawhan learned to his sorrow.

Strawhan, carrying two six-guns and plenty of liquor, came hurtling into Drum's barroom. Wild Bill, who had been watching a card game, turned, moved back slightly, and stood leaning against the bar.

"There he is now," Strawhan bleated, and slapped his hand over the butt of a Colt. "Now, you old son, you'll get yours."

Hickok waited till Strawhan's gun was out and up. Then his slender right hand streaked to his holster, a gun leaped out, and Strawhan fired two bullets into the ceiling as Wild Bill's slug tore into his head. Then Hickok said sadly: "That's too bad. I told that fellow over in Ellsworth he might get hurt if he didn't behave."

Strawhan, killed in October, had hardly been buried in Hays City's Boot Hill before Bad Bill Mulvey came gunning for Hickok.

"Wild Bill got Strawhan," he yelled, "but Strawhan was nobody. He didn't have sense enough to play his hole-card. Me, I'll tame this wild man from Leavenworth."

When Wild Bill was told that Mulvey was gunning for him he went looking for the killer. Then, turning a corner, Wild

Bill found Mulvey—a gun in each hand.

"Now," roared Mulvey, "le's see if yuh c'n pull a Jack Strawhan on me. Who holds th' winnin' hand here, Mister Wildman?"

Wild Bill's lips were smiling under his long mustache. "That pair's hard to beat," he admitted; and then, his face clouding, he yelled: "No, no, men— don't shoot the poor fellow in the back. He's only funnin'."

Like an amateur, Mulvey whirled. Bill's gun was out and belching. As Mulvey fell, with a slug in his head, Bill took his guns from him and murmured: "There wasn't anybody behind you, son. The man you allus have to watch is the man in front of you." So Mulvey joined Strawhan in Boot Hill.

BAT MASTERSON, discussing certain red pages in frontier history from the early '50's to the late '70's, told me that it was not at all strange that so many men were killed. He said:

"The strange thing is that more men were not blotted out. Just close your eyes and try to see the picture as it was. Take a backward look at Kansas during the heyday of the cattle barons.

"That long, rough trail from Texas was alive with men and swarming with stock. Just imagine five hundred thousand head of cattle, pointed for the railheads, and driven by five thousand cowboys—all in one month or less. Then think of scads of money, droves of badmen, barrels of whisky, women galore and twenty saloons, gambling houses and honkytonks in a single short block. Do you wonder that there were killings?

"There was no law. Colt was king. Buffalo hunters, bullwhackers, bushwhackers, fugitives, crack shots from every State and Territory. And wild-eyed cowboys who feared nothing, neither man nor devil. Now add the riff-raff from the Mexican and Civil Wars. Throw in the boiling animosities and the low-down, ingrowing hatreds of men in general. Picture this. Then, in a faint way, you may understand the frontier conditions confronting Wild Bill Hickok."

Here Bat paused and smiled grimly. Then he finished: "They call him the superman, and I reckon he was something like that. I knew twenty hired gunmen who tried to get him. But they weren't smart enough. Old Bill was too keen. Most of those fellows wished, if they had time to make a wish, that they'd gone about their business and let Bill Hickok do the same."

Phil Coe was one of the men Bat had in mind. It was said that Texas cattlemen and Kansas gamblers induced Coe to try issues with Wild Bill. Bat said:

"One evening I saw Wild Bill, walking in the middle of the street, with a double-barreled shotgun in the crotch of his arm. I asked: 'What's up?' Bill said: 'Oh nothin' much. Jist some of them fool Texas fellers talkin' of runnin' me out of town.' I asked him if he needed any help. He patted the shotgun, winked and walked on. Old Betsy was all he needed."

BUT shotguns didn't figure in the duel with Coe. Bill invariably had his Colt six-guns, whether in Kansas City, Leavenworth, Hays City, Ellsworth or Abilene. And it was one of these that cut Coe down.

It was near the end of the Abilene fair. The town was brimming with killers, and Wild Bill had sworn in a number of deputies to help him maintain some semblance of order. Sharp and unmistakable the order went out:

"No shooting in this town. Leave your guns with the bartender."

In most cow-towns where Earp, Masterson and Hickok served as peace officers, there was a convenient gun-rack in each saloon. Here the cowboys and other bad hombres were told to leave their guns.

Coe disobeyed this order. Suddenly there was a rattle of shots. Then a man named Williams, one of Wild Bill's deputies, came running to inform the marshal that hell was brewing in the street.

"All right," said Bill. "I'll go attend to it. You stay here and watch this end of the street. If any of them try to close in on me, you take care of them."

Wild Bill faced Coe in the street. He called: "Was that you doin' that shootin? If so, take off your guns and drop 'em in the road."

This was his customary manner of disarming the badmen. But Coe spat out:

"Go for your hogleg, you old long-haired son. I'm from Texas and I come ablazin'."

Coe's gun was out. Some say Bill drew

both his six-guns. Bat says he drew only one. In any case, their six-shooters roared in unison. Coe fell mortally wounded. Then Bill heard a man running behind him. He whirled, flicked up his gun, and fired. Another victim fell.

But this bullet, which Bill maintained was the unluckiest shot he ever made, brought down Bill's own deputy. It was Williams. Bill's eyes were misty as he gazed down on the stricken deputy. He said: "Pore feller. I feel like I'd killed my own brother. I told Williams to stay at the other end of the street. When he ran in on me I thought he was another one of them Texas killers."

This saddened Wild Bill. Bat said he never seemed to feel remorse over killing badmen, for he felt this was in the line of duty, but the shooting of Williams moved him deeply and he didn't get over it for many months.

HOW many men did Wild Bill kill? Time and the prolific typewriters of irresponsible recorders have played havoc with the figures. I have seen one schedule which runs into the hundreds. This is absurd.

I doubt whether anyone knows. Buffalo Bill told my father that Wild Bill killed thirty-six men. And Colorado Charlie told him thirty-six. Both knew Bill intimately.

But Bill himself told Henry M. Stanley, "I guess I've killed well over a hundred." Bat Masterson places the figure at eighty-seven. Wyatt Earp told me he thought all the figures were exaggerated. I lean toward Earp's view.

The chances are that Wild Bill included his war record and his Indian killings when he told Stanley he killed 100 men. He wiped out many Indians, including Conquering Bear, whom he finished in a knife duel in a ten-foot circle.

But there is little question that he disposed of many men, both in and out of the line of duty. Some partisans assert that all his killings were done in the name of the law. Not quite. Some of them—in fact, quite a number—were attributable to other causes.

Bill was a good-looking devil, with numerous sweethearts, and if this means anything at all, it indicates jealousy. Bat Masterson said he knew six or seven men who sought to kill Bill because they quarreled over frontier ladies. But these didn't kill Bill. They got killed.

Hickok himself didn't talk much of his killings. Both Earp and Masterson told me that he was very quiet, softspoken, a trifle cynical and somewhat ashamed of the appellation of Wild Bill. He preferred to be called Jim or, in the case of strangers, Mr. Hickok.

This nickname, incidentally, is one of the several garbled legends surrounding Hickok. Popular misconception would have us believe that the name was bestowed upon young Hickok, then little more than a boy, when he killed ten men in a bloody fight near Rocky Creek Station, Nebraska. This should not be taken too literally.

Careful search of the record indicates, as Wyatt Earp has asserted, that, not ten men, but three—David C. McCanles, James Woods and James Gordon—were killed.

"And Hickok wasn't called Wild Bill then," Wyatt Earp explained, "nor did he get the nickname as a result of this fight. The fact of the matter is, the nickname didn't belong to Jim, anyway. It had been given to a brother, although his name wasn't Bill at all, and when someone, quite mistakenly, hung it on Jim it clung like a burr. I don't think he liked it any too well, particularly as he grew older, and he liked us to call him Jim. And that's what we called him, around Kansas City and in Abilene and at Hays City."

This nickname, like Hickok's birthplace and family background, has been the basis for much irresponsible writing. Various pen-artists have had Wild Bill born all the way from Portland, Maine, to Eureka, California. The most persistent misrepresentation, that he was a quarter-breed born in Cherokee Strip.

James Butler Hickok first saw the light of day in an upstairs room of a two-story frame house which stood beside the road in La Salle County, Illinois. This was in the little town of Homer, later called Troy Grove. There was no more Indian blood in his veins than there is in the Mississippi River.

His father, like the father of Jesse James, was educated for the ministry. His name was William Alonzo Hickok. He was born in Vermont. And so was Bill's

mother. The Butler in Bill's name was in honor of his mother. Her name was Polly Butler. She married William Alonzo Hickok while he was studying for the ministry. But he didn't preach. Illness prevented. So he became a storekeeper, then a farmer. This is what brought the family to Illnois.

"OLD long-haired Bill, he was yaller. I made him crawfish."

Wes Hardin, Texas badman, makes this statement. John Wesley Hardin, credited with fifteen notches before he was eighteen. I asked Masterson about this. Bat laughed. He said:

"The only time Bill ever ran was when he shot up the Seventh Cavalry. Then he had mighty good cause to ske-daddle. I know I'd have run. Most any other man would."

We will come to this. But first, Wes Hardin. Fred Sutton, an old-time cowboy and peace officer, investigated the Hardin assertion. Sutton knew Hickok, Masterson, Tilghman, Pat Garrett and other renowned Westerners, including Billy the Kid. He was familiar with conditions in the cow-towns. Sutton said:

"I talked with men who were in Abilene when Hardin was there. They all agreed that his story was false.

"The facts were that Wild Bill Hickok did not molest John Wesley Hardin, although he knew that Hardin had been sent to Abilene to kill him. Despite this, Bill went quietly about his business, never seeking Hardin nor even inquiring about him.

"That was Bill's way. He would give him all the rope he wanted. Then, when he got bold and committed some overt act, Bill would step in and add one to the list of badmen who tried to beat him to the draw.

"Hardin made a lot of threats. I guess he thought Bill was afraid of him. One night, while on a spree, he shot a man. Then he went to a hotel, undressed himself, and went to bed.

"Bill heard of it. He hired a hack and drove out to the hotel. In some way, Hardin was apprised of Bill's coming.

"Hardin looked out the window, saw Bill get out of the hack, and enter the hotel.

"Then Hardin took window and all with him as he leaped through. He alighted on top of the hack, still in his underclothing, stole a horse that was hitched near by and, in that undressed state, headed for Texas. He never returned."

CORN rot-gut and a soldier wearing the uniform of the U. S. Cavalry got Wild Bill into a jam with General Sheridan and caused him to do the only running that Bat Masterson could recall.

"You know Bill was no respecter of persons," Bat said in relating the circumstances to me, "and as marshal of Hays City, he felt, and not without some cause, that he was just as important, in his own way, as General Sheridan was in his. The trouble rose over those hell-raising soldiers at the fort. Bill had warned their officers to keep the cavalrymen in bounds. I think they ignored him.

"One of the troopers, drunker than usual, rode his nag into a barroom and announced he was going to perform some tricks on a billiard table. Then old Bill showed up. He had a trick of doing that. He was always patrolling around, watching things, keeping the devils in check. Bill looked at the trooper and said:

"'Here, you soldier—take that horse out of here.'

"But the soldier said, 'You go to hell. I'm goin' to show the boys how a cavalry hoss can play pool.'

"Bill motioned the other men away. Then he said: 'You heard what I said. Take that horse out of here. Then you both go back to the fort,' That was all Bill said."

Bat paused and looked out the window. Then he said: "That was Bill's way, you see. He wasn't much on conversation."

I waited. Finally I said: "Yes, I know. But the soldier on the horse?"

Bat smiled sadly. He said: "That poor fellow made a terrible mistake. He shot at Bill. So Bill had to kill him."

Then there was hell to pay, it seems, and finally an officer rode over from the fort. He had a number of troopers with him. They wore their side arms. Bill said:

"Soldiers, I don't want any trouble. But if you start anything, I shore will finish it."

Then, almost before the men of Hays City knew what was up, a fierce battle was on and Wild Bill was in a good way of being killed. Guns began crashing. When

they ceased three cavalrymen were dead and others were injured.

"And that," said Bat, "was the time I meant when I said Bill ran away. He rode across the prairie to see me. We had a drink and he told me about the fight. When he got through I asked:

"But why did you run?"

He looked at me with those clear eyes. At last I saw 'em twinkle. Then he said:

"Shucks, Bat, you know I couldn't fight the hull United States Cavalry."

BILL HICKOK was Scotch-Irish. Perhaps, in a measure, this accounts for his fighting proclivities. He could do battle with spears, knives, swords, wagon-spokes, single-trees, his fists, six-guns, rifles and shotguns. When he was kid they placed a gun in his hands. When he died they buried one beside him. Colorado Charlie saw to this. Just so his old pard wouldn't be lonely.

Western America has read much, and heard more, of Wild Bill's exploits, but there were two points on which I wanted special information. First, his marksmanship. Second, his personal appearance.

Fortunately, first-hand information was available to me. Both Wyatt Earp and Bat Masterson were very close to the man. Each had a rich fund of experiences. I asked Bat how fast Bill could draw.

Bat snapped his fingers. "Drew faster than that," he said quickly. "Bill had it all figured out. He generally waited till the other fellow drew. But not many could beat him into action.

"I asked him once to demonstrate for me," said Bat. "He didn't want to do it. Finally he agreed and I took him up to my room. He had on his Prince Albert and there were no guns in sight. He stood before me, a tall, straight, fine looking man, with plenty of brown hair, a flowing mustache, and a pair of the steadiest eyes I've ever seen. Those eyes . . . I think they licked many a man. Ben Thompson said they had little hells in them. They certainly did.

" 'Now, Bat,' Bill said, 'you go for your gun—just like you'd do if you was after a man. Go ahead now.' I knew I had to be fast. I tried to think fast. I said I would make the fastest draw of my life. And I think I did. But it was no use. Old Bill's guns were out. He had me covered. I felt foolish. He could draw like lightning, one gun or two, it made no difference. It was dazzling.

"I asked him to show me the works. He did. But he said, 'Now, don't you tell nobody.' Bill had a pair of trick holsters under his coat. The fronts of these had been ripped out. The guns were held in place by springs which gripped the barrels.

"Bill didn't pull up, as we did, but pulled sidewise. In this way he saved just that much time—the difference between life and death. He didn't shoot from the hip, as many claim, but threw the guns in front of him, with a little crook in his elbow, and just enough up-shoot to bring the target in line.

"Aim? I don't think he ever thought of that. He seemed to have a feeling, a sort of instinct, I guess, that the target was in line. Anyway, he blazed away without any fussing around. I don't know what kind of shooting you'd call it, but I'd say it was artistic. And plumb deadly."

WYATT EARP saw Bill shoot with the brace of six-guns presented to him by Senator Wilson.

"It was in Kansas City," said Earp, "and there were a number of men around when Bill shot. Many of these were fine shots. Jack Gallagher was there. He could shoot. But no man there could hold a candle to Bill. His speed, judgment and accuracy were amazing. I can think of no other word for it.

"Personally, I had known for some time that Bill could drive a cork through a bottle, split bullets on ten-cent pieces and hit two telegraph-poles, firing with both hands at the same time; but I was surprised, and I guess the others were amazed, when he took those guns Senator Wilson had given him and did a wonderful piece of shooting at 100 yards.

"He shot at a signboard, before I even dreamed what he was planning on, and I heard five shots rattle out so fast it was hard to count 'em. Then, quick as a flash, he swapped guns, and I heard another rattle. Then Bill said:

"I was shootin' at the O, boys. Go over there now an' see if I cum clost to it."

"I looked at that O myself. Every bullet was inside of it. It was fine shooting,

the finest I've ever seen, but it was not the best Bill could do. He was a marvel with a revolver at any range up to 400 yards."

Here, we see two outstanding points. One was that Wild Bill could sink ten slugs into a man's heart—for that O was no larger!—at 100 yards and upwards. And the other point, that he fired five shots from each gun. We hear a great deal about old-time gunmen firing "six slugs from their six-shooters," but the fact is that Bill Hickok, Bat Masterson, Wyatt Earp and all other sensible gunmen invariably left the sixth chamber empty. This was the safety chamber. There were no safety-locks on the guns those men used.

Earp, with fine contempt for much of the lurid literature which has swamped Wild Bill, said he never saw Bill fire a gun from the hip. Earp, like Masterson, insisted that Bill fired much the same as every other Western crack shot—except that he was infinitely more swift. But he held the gun slightly above hip-level and in front of his body.

"And there was no fancy business," said Earp. "No squirming around, no twisting sidewise. He just drew his gun and fired. And he didn't always draw both of his guns, except in a gang fight, for with a man like Bill Hickok, one shot generally finished the fight when only one rival was involved.

"Bill Hickok had the right idea about shooting-irons. He never went for a gun unless he had to kill a man to save his own life. But when he went he went blazing. No monkey business about it. Too many of those fellows from Texas didn't understand this. They thought, some of them, that a gun was made to run a bluff with. Well, maybe it is. But not with a man like Bill Hickok."

IT seems odd that a man who ran the bullet gamut for more than twenty years—a dauntless figure who looked into the eyes of some of the most notorious killers this country has ever known—should come to the end of the trail by violating the first law of the Old West:

"Never sit with your back to a door!"

Yet this is precisely the mistake that the Beau Brummel of the frontier made when he turned his back on Kansas and sought the golden pastures of Deadwood, South Dakota. Something wrong here. Wild Bill was slipping.

Bill was not yet forty, but his eyes were giving him trouble. And, having recently married Agnes Lake in Cheyenne, he was worried about the future.

He was looking for a stake. He wanted to settle down. He was anxious to put behind him the two-gun record which clung to him like a cockle-burr.

He went to Cincinnati, for a ten-day honeymoon with Agnes Lake, but left her with relatives and started West again. This time the Black Hills of Dakota were calling the tall son of Illinois. He stopped a day in Louisville, where he had friends, and there, all unconsciously, he rubbed elbows with men and women who knew the cross-eyed Kentuckian who had been chosen by fate to play the most sensational hand that had ever been stacked against Wild Bill Hickok.

DEADWOOD . . . The name itself must have had a singular effect on Wild Bill. He was sad, ill at ease, strangely conscious of impending disaster. To Colorado Charlie Utter he said:

"I told you when we rode in here from Cheyenne that I had a funny feeling I'd come to my last camp. And I still feel that way."

Colorado Charlie laughed at him. "Brace up, Bill," he said, "and remember we are in the Black Hills to find gold and not trouble. You're goin' to make a stake and buy a home for Agnes. Then you'll settle down and be a great old daddy."

This encouraged Bill. That night he wrote Agnes: "Never mind, pet. We will have a home yet. Then we'll be so happy."

But the blues returned. They hounded him in his little makeshift tent-home in the hills above Deadwood. He couldn't sleep. So he got up, buckled on his guns, and wandered around the town, going from saloon to saloon, meeting many men and scrutinizing all. But he saw no one he suspected, encountered no man he need fear.

Nevertheless, he sat down and wrote a letter. It was to Agnes. It read:

"If we never meet again, while firing my last shot, I will breathe the name of Agnes. Then, with wishes even for my enemies, I

will make the plunge and try to swim to the other shore."

Morning came, and he felt better, but afternoon shadows brought back that presentiment. So he dropped into a bar, in the narrow, log-strewn, rutted street, and accepted an invitation to play a game of cards.

His companion, a stoop-shouldered, cross-eyed man he knew only as Jack. Bill, his back to the wall, paid little attention to Jack. But he watched the door. And he eyed the other men. And Cross-eyed Jack watched him. The game ended. Bill was restless. He got up.

"Thanks, pard," he said absently, "but no more today. I guess I'll be gettin' out to the camp to see Colorado Charlie. See you tomorrow."

"Sure," said the other, "I'll be here."

The cross-eyed man was Kentucky Jack McCall. He watched Bill disappear. Then he slipped out. As he crossed the street, heading for another saloon, he brushed against Calamity Jane. Men said she was Bill's sweetheart. Jack McCall smirked. But Jane swore: "I meet a cross-eyed man crossing the street. Oh, hell! Bad luck!" She spat over her shoulder and went teetering up the gulch.

In a secluded corner of another saloon two killers from Montana awaited Jack McCall. They wanted Hickok killed.

"Well?" They squinted at McCall. "Well, what about it?"

"Not today," said Jack McCall, "but maybe tomorrow. Yes, I guess it'll be tomorrow."

AUGUST 2, 1876. Wednesday afternoon. Late. A poker game in the saloon of Jerry Lewis. Harry Young behind the bar. Those in the poker game, Captain Massey, Charlie Rich, Carl Mann, and Wild Bill Hickok.

But what's this—Wild Bill with his back to a door? Something wrong here. Has the old pistoleer slipped so badly as all this?

No. He doesn't like it. And he keeps objecting. The men sit on stools. There are no chairs. Charlie Rich has the stool against the wall. But he won't swap with Bill. He teases Bill:

"You don't have to worry here. This ain't Abilene. Nothing's going to happen."

Bill smiles. That little cynical sneer. Nothing will happen as long as he can see from all angles. But now he's violating the old trail law:

"Never sit with your back to a door."

Bill glances round at Harry Young. Harry understands. He nods reassuringly. Bill can see the front door. But Harry will have to watch that rear door. It stands open. Spitting death might enter there. Many a man of Hays, Ellsworth, Abilene and Dodge had paid the price for just such an error. And quite well Bill Hickok knew it. What had happened there might happen here.

The cards are dealt. The players squint at their hands. Bill has aces and eights—two pair. Now he becomes very thoughtful, intent on his work.

Behind him, a step, then a man enters. Bill throws him a running glance. But it is only the cross-eyed Kentuckian, Jack McCall. Who cares for a cross-eyed Kentuckian in Deadwood?

But Calamity Jane, heading for a butcher-shop up the street—she wants beef for broth for a sick child up the gulch—cares and says so. To Jake Shoudy, the butcher, she complains: "More bad luck. I just met that cross-eyed fool again." Ike Brown growls: "Oh, don't worry, Jane. Somebody'll shoot him." Then—*bang!* There is a shot. "There. I told you. Somebody did."

IN the barroom Jack McCall first sauntered to the bar, then moved toward the poker players. He had a gun, a .45 Colt, but nobody paid any attention to that. Deadwood was full of concentrated hell. Every man carried a gun. Some men carried two. Wild Bill's large head, with its long brown hair, presented an admirable target.

Jack McCall came as close as he dared, keeping behind Bill. Then he jerked that Colt and fired. The roar startled Harry Young and the others.

The slug struck Bill in the back of the head, went through his skull, and tore into Captain Massey's left arm.

Bill slumped sidewise and fell from his stool. The shot was clean, perfect. There wasn't the slightest struggle from the king of pistoleers. An assassin had tricked him, and Bill had no chance to turn on him with

blazing six-guns. He was hit from behind, as he had feared, and he pitched to his death without moving a muscle. Bill the Magnificent was dead.

Jack McCall, the assassin, went zig-zagging from the bar, snapping his Colt at Harry Young and the others. But not another cap exploded. The only good shot in the gun was the one that dropped Wild Bill. Suppose this had failed?

Into the twisted street and up the gulch McCall ran, flourishing his gun. He yelled: "He killed my brother but I got him. Yes, I got old Wild Bill." Men yanked their guns and started after him. So he ran into Jake Shoudy's butcher shop.

And there he was cornered by Ike Brown and Calamity Jane. Jane snarled: "You dirty, cross-eyed, white-livered son of a coward—if I had my gun I'd kill you." But Brown said: "Aw, let 'em hang him, Jane. Shootin's too good for a low-down skunk like him. They'll crack his neck before sunset."

When the crowd of men arrived at the butcher shop, he made no resistance. He continued his shrieking denunciations of Wild Bill, still asserting that Hickok had killed his brother, and that he was but evening up the score. Many members of the crowd, and Calamity Jane in particular insisted that he be taken out to the nearest tree and made to stretch rope, but their suggestion was over-ruled by others who demanded that the affair be taken care of by the courts. A trial, they were all certain, would end only in one way—the jurors would find him guilty, and would be quick to pronounce sentence upon him.

But they didn't. By a strange process of reasoning, a jury acquitted Jack McCall for killing Wild Bill Hickok in cold blood. It held that in consideration of the defendant's statement that Wild Bill had killed his brother in cold blood, and without giving him a chance to defend himself, his action in shooting Hickok was justifiable and that the guilty man should be acquitted.

The verdict, signed by Charles Whitehead, read: "We, the jurors, find Mr. John McCall not guilty.

Calamity Jane said: "It was almost like they were glad the skunk had killed Bill Hickok. But this ain't the last of it. Jack McCall will come to his end if I have to shoot him myself. Oh, Lord, what a pity it was that his first shot went off. All the other caps was bad. Bill would've filled him full of lead."

Colorado Charlie Utter and the others buried Wild Bill on a hill above Deadwood. Charlie placed beside Bill his old Sharp's rifle. He said: "I don't know that you'll need her, pard, but if you do she's loaded."

Then they started out quietly in search of Kentucky Jack McCall. If they found him they would lynch him. But McCall had fled. He made tracks for Wyoming.

JACK McCALL went over to Laramie and did a little drinking. Then he did a bit of boasting:

"Sure I burned old Wild Bill down. And I could do it again. But he didn't kill my brother. That was a put up job to save my neck."

But the cross-eyed killer spoke too soon. Bill's friends were on his trail. They jailed him and gave him another trial. This time at Yankton. It was short and sweet. The avengers were sure of their ground. The jury reported.

"We find Jack McCall guilty of murder."

McCall got an appeal. But it availed nothing. The Supreme Court made it unanimous.

So the law, which James Butler Hickok tried to uphold in his crude way, stretched out its long arm and placed a heavy hand on the neck of his assassin. And in that hand was a noose. They fitted the noose around Jack McCall's neck and dropped him into eternity.

Three years later Charlie Utter and "the boys" removed Bill's body from the hill to Mount Moriah Cemetery. And there he sleeps beside Calamity Jane.

"Bill was smilin', calm-like," said Colorado Charlie, "and I allow he was right happy. Mebbe he was glad we took care of that cross-eyed feller."

Perhaps. But then, again, maybe Wild Bill was merely glad and at peace because all the shooting was over.

# Lone Long-Knife

By CARSON McRAE

**The Big Muddy was flowing red. Sioux raced the warpath. The Company needed a man to out-maneuver Death, needed him bad—and that man was Yarcum, kissed by a British saber and jilted by a Loyalist maid.**

"NOT till you clear the Sioux out of the Dog Tent Hills!"

Durant McFayle, Factor of the Northwest Company's trading post at *Riviere la Souris,* sat down again. His simple, terse sentence brought dismay to the council of Assiniboine and Cree chieftains. They had been expecting him to help them against the Sioux, but his words amounted to flat refusal. Surprise and anger leaped around the circle of smoke-copper faces.

No one answered. The dead silence, taut as a bowstring and as ready to snap, was fraught with danger. McFayle turned to his assistant, a young frontiersman of twenty-five, and spoke softly in English.

"Talk to them, Yarcum. You've a ready tongue and a gift of their language. If

I had my own way about it, I'd risk sending muskets and supplies to their allies, the Missouri Mandanes. But the Northwest Company Partners in Montreal have given me orders to risk nothing. If I disobey and lose a convoy to the Sioux, I'll be disgraced."

Nathan Yarcum stood slowly erect. Medium-tall and wiry, dressed in canvas and beaten deerskin, legs straight-built and wide apart, face hawk-like, and eyes the warm brown of autumn in his native Massachusetts. A melancholy, strange for so young a man, struck those who looked into his face.

The kiss of a British saber in the Cornwall compaign of the American Revolution had left a furrowed scar on his right cheek. For three summers and winters in Minnesota woods and beyond in the perilous Missouri Sioux country, he had been agent for the American fur companies, feeling westward from Ohio, and now for the Canadian Northwest Company feeling south and west from Winnipeg.

"My chief," Yarcum began in soft Assiniboine, inclining his head toward McFayle, "is not to blame for refusing to send powder and guns to the Mandanes, your allies. He must obey the orders of the big chiefs over him. Moreover, it is wise that no convoy be sent down to the Missouri. None ever pass the Dog Tent Hills. The Sioux have ambushed and plundered three pack-trains in two years. They have thereby secured guns and powder to use against you. Another pack-train will only strengthen their hands. There is no peace with the Sioux!"

A grunt of approval greeted Yarcum's terse reasoning. But across the circle, the war leader of the Assiniboines sprang to his feet.

"Are we to fold our arms and mourn like squaws for those whose blood has reddened the ground at the feet of the Sioux?" he demanded with fiery gestures. "They have taken the buffalo ranges which formerly were ours. We have no meat for winter nor skins for lodges and robes. They have cut off the route to the Missouri, and you, trader, can now get no furs from the Big Muddy tribes nor sell them your goods. Against them my people alone can do nothing. Was it longer ago than the waning of the last moon that fifty of my warriors went to clear the Dog Tent Hills and were defeated with a score slain?

"If you, trader, will not help us, then my warriors and the Crees will no longer stand between you and the Sioux knives. We will go north to the strong woods, and our furs will be sold to the English Company. There is no peace with the Sioux!"

Old Kawkawak, *sakatow* of the Assiniboines got up to speak. He was fully sixty years old. His words seemed to come from deep in his chest.

"My young brother borrowed his tongue from a gray-beard, his words are wise," Kawkawak began, indicating Nathan Yarcum. "If only a dozen pack-horses can be taken through with guns and powder for the Mandanes, the Big Bellies and the Pawnees, they can strike from the south and we from the north. We can trap the peace-breakers, and blaze a broad road through to our allies. Then the ranges will be ours for the hunt, the route yours for trading. But we must have help. Else we will fold our lodges and go north. There is no peace with the Sioux!"

Factor McFayle paled at the ugly threat. If the two great tribes moved away, not only would his fort be useless for lack of trading, but it would be plundered and razed at the first raid of the far-reaching Sioux. Plainly the whole council was hostile, because of his refusal to help. But his hands were tied. In his helplessness he turned to Yarcum.

"Have you a plan, Nathan? I can't lend them aid. It would be useless anyway. No number of warriors we can muster would be able to break through."

Without answering, Yarcum rose again. Five young Assiniboines, who had crouched in the rear of the circle, now stood behind him. They ranged from eighteen to twenty-two. None of them were warriors yet; they were called "Kawkawak's soldiers" and were his especial pride. Their business was to patrol the big camp, to break up gambling quarrels, to prevent solitary hunters from going out and chasing away the buffalo, and to supervise the mimic animal games at which the Assiniboines were past masters.

The three eldest—Black Beaver, Ugly Deer, and Squeaky Oak intended to marry three sparkle-eyed black-tressed Assini-

boine girls, slender as birch saplings and lithe as young antelopes of the plains. But a Cree sub-chief had demanded the *siches* for his sons. Kawkawak's soldiers had yet no word in council, no property in horses, no warrior standing. The Assiniboines refused to cause trouble with the Crees by breaking the age-old custom that gave the women to the warrior of highest rank.

At Yarcum's signal to the five young Assiniboines, an "Ugh!" of surprise ran about the council circle. McFayle looked wide-eyed.

"No war party can stand against the Sioux," Yarcum said. "Therefore only I and these five young warriors will go to the Dog Tent Hills, on foot and with no weapons but bows. Discovery will mean death. We must be lynx-eyed and lynx-footed.

"We may discover a road, east or west of the Hills. Fat buffalo hunting may draw the peace-breakers away for half a moon, during which time a pack-train can slip through to our allies. Or the *Keechee Keechee Manitou* may show us a way."

As they walked back to the dwelling house inside the stockade, McFayle remonstrated with his assistant.

"It is suicide for you, or worse if you fall alive into Sioux hands. I can understand why the young Assiniboines hold life lightly—but you. . . ."

"For that same reason," Yarcum said. "My fiancée was of a Loyalist family. She went with them to Montreal when the Colonies won freedom."

"I heard," McFayle nodded sympathetically. "Her father was first a merchant. Now he is a strong partner in the Northwest Company. If you *do* break through to the Missouri, we will need a post among the Mandanes and the post will need a Factor."

"Thanks," said Yarcum simply.

"You are a man, Nathan Yarcum," the grizzly headed factor said slowly, "in spite of your having led a company of ragged Continentals against the King, God bless him! You know it is suicide, not Sioux, that you will meet. My last word is: do not fall *alive* into their hands!"

AGAINST the crimson Western evening, three horsemen rode along the profile of a hill. Their forms were blood-red silhouettes. As they wheeled at each end of the patrol ridge, they kept up a sun-flash chat with Sioux on a rock elevation miles to the east, and with still others far to the west.

Below the mounted scouts, in the long purple shadows of the hill-slope, was the Sioux camp, a cluster of two dozen summer-time, buffalo-skin lodges. Placottes of dried cow bison, and skins of Indian corn, wild rice and fish hung from poles. No women, no children, no dogs. Only painted warriors, at least five dozen of them. They were dressing their weapons, smearing their cues with bright-red clay, and braiding ropes of the long hair plucked from between the horns of bison.

Below the camp, in a horseshoe prairion formed by the creek's meandering, were one hundred and fifty swift sorrel mounts, a third of them hobbled. This was the main corral for all the Sioux east and west of the Dog Tent Hills. The half dozen young warriors who guarded the herd were gathering the sorrels together in groups of twenty-odd, leading them toward the staked corral near the clutter of teepees for safety's sake, for a Sioux without a horse could neither rob nor hunt.

Five hundred yards across the creek from the camp, in a swamp with a bog approach in every direction, Yarcum with his Assiniboines had lain all day in a willow covert, unable to stir a yard without danger of being spotted by the eagle eye on the look-out hill. The peril of discovery was only a tithe of their troubles. Their provisions were exhausted. They could find no more wild pears. They dared not even cook callops of antelope over the smokeless fire of dried *bois de vache*—the "bodewash" of prairie frontiersmen.

In the two weeks since they had left the *Riviere la Souris* House, they had scouted a hundred miles west to Turtle Lake and Hurricane Hills and found the country impassable from heavy rains. In constant peril on the open plains, they had scouted a hundred and fifty miles east toward the Red River valley, only to find large parties of Sioux driving buffalo and watching every possible route by water or land.

Their first scheme, to find another route, had failed completely. Their second—to watch the Sioux until they left to hunt

buffalo for a week during which time a pack-horse train could easily slip through —was certain of failure too. The war party across the creek had provisions for three months. They were at the strategic point for the sole business of robbing, plundering and murdering. They did not even hunt the antelope, or "jumping cabbrie," which grazed in the creek bottoms and fraternized with the horses.

As dark settled, Ugly Deer got out his bow—a short but powerful weapon of ram-horn, wound tightly with glued rattlesnake skin. Save for knives and Yarcum's brass-barreled pistol, there was not another weapon in the party. With belts tightened from two days of fasting, they left the covert to hunt antelope and to scout around the Sioux camp. Stepping carefully upon firm tussocks, they reached the creek bank and waded it.

"You must kill, Ugly Deer, with a single shot," Yarcum ordered in a whisper, swimming silently beside the oldest Indian. "A wounded antelope discovered with an Assiniboine arrow in his flank would be a death warrant, swift and sure."

Ugly Deer, slightly leading the others, put a warning hand upon Yarcum's arm. Yarcum passed the signal. He peered at the west bank toward which Ugly Deer was working his keen eyes and ears and even nose; but he detected nothing. The party stopped, treading water silently. Then Ugly Deer slapped his hand on the water with a resounding smack. A minute later a slight rustling of iron weeds, fading away up the creek bank, proved that the Sioux sentry had taken the noise he heard for merely a roving beaver.

They swam on, hugging the east bank, past the grazing prairion, past the next curve, and on to where a gurgling meadow brook from the hills flowed into the creek. Ugly Deer directed the others ashore. They crouched on a rock jutting above the brook's mouth, and waited.

The prairie sky, lit by stars and low quarter-moon, gave light enough for them to see twenty paces on the gravel bar. In the quiet they heard a band of buffalo stampeding a dozen miles away; heard the low rumble fade into the north. Prairie wolves howled from sentinel knolls, or whined on the chase of antelope. Red-throated loons called crazily in marshes along the creek. Far away, so far it seemed the sound must surely come from the distant Rockies, a timber wolf raised his thin, crescendo wailing.

UGLY DEER'S judgment soon proved itself. The spot was a watering-place for the antelope, where they were protected on three sides from wolves when they were drinking. A band of four tripped out of the weeds and bent their necks at the water edge. Two arrows from Ugly Deer's bow dropped two of them in their tracks.

Within three hours he shot five, an arrow to each and no struggle signs left for Sioux eyes to read.

"We will take the skins, and the meat parts that will keep without being smoked," he directed. "Squeaky Oak and his younger brother will carry them back to the willows. The others of us will nose about the peace-breaker's camp. What remains of the carcasses we will sink with rocks here where the creek is deepest."

With patience that seemed to Yarcum tedious and half unnecessary, Ugly Deer worked carefully to blot out every sign of the antelope killing. When he had finished, and when Squeaky Oak and his brother had left with the skins and meat, he drew four pairs of wornout moccasins from his belt.

"They are Sioux," he explained. "I found them at a camp when we were scouting east. We must leave tracks in the grass and over the gravel, but those tracks will be of Sioux moccasins and not Assiniboine. Now you, white almost-brother, walk with a straight toe instead of feet out like a scaly tailed opossum."

Spread out to avoid making a noticeable trail, they crept inland a hundred paces before heading up-creek toward the camp. Twice Ugly Deer detected night scouts to right and left of them; but each time slipped safely past. Once a feathered sub-chief, suddenly appearing against the sky-line, walked straight toward them, and strode between Yarcum and Ugly Deer. The latter could have touched him with his bow. The low-sunken moon and starlight dimmed by a scum of mackerel clouds saved the party from being discovered.

Inside the circle of sentries, they moved with less danger. As they crept close, they

saw the horse corral was heavily guarded. Ugly Deer left and slipped ahead. He was back in a minute.

"I thought we might stampede the horses and each with a mount escape before dawn," he whispered. "If they lose their horses they will have to go afoot to their Red River camp, a ten-sun journey, and four suns for return. In that time a pack-train could easily slip through to the Missouri. But a third of the camp are guarding the mounts, and the others are sleeping within a bow-shot. We must go back to our hiding and think of another cunning."

They retraced their steps to the creek and swam back to their willow covert by the time a few fingers of gray were reaching up into the eastern sky.

THAT day, in the early afternoon, Yarcum roused his lightly sleeping companions. His face, usually impassive as a pool of dark water, was troubled. He pointed to the Sioux camp, where a group of warriors stood in the teepee circle. One man was talking rapidly, with tongue and hands. The whole camp was seething.

"That warrior hurried up from the creek where we killed the antelopes," said Yarcum. "He has discovered something."

When the Sioux warrior had finished his telling, a dozen went back with him toward the brook's mouth out of sight of the willow covert.

"Tonoga"—Yarcum spoke to the youngest Assiniboine—"you are lithe and slender, they call you the Girl. Slip through a rabbit run under this marsh grass to where you can see the *batture*."

Tonoga wriggled off. In half an hour, with scarce a rustle of grass, he slipped again into the midst of his five comrades.

"They know we are about," he said tersely. "Where we sank the waste meat, the warrior saw many turtles. The Sioux dived and brought up the carcasses. They found an arrow head. They are flashing the word to the four corners of the plains."

Ugly Deer grimaced. "A papoose in tree-swing would have thought of the turtles. If the Sioux fail to find us before nightfall, we must try to leave then."

"And go back in time to see our *siches* married to the sons of the Cree sub-chief," Black Beaver sneered. "I stay."

"Who spoke of going back?" Ugly Deer retorted hotly. "There are other ways of dying than scotched by Sioux fire. We must get away from them now, and wait another chance to trade our lives for a score of theirs."

"There is no getting away now," Yarcum interrupted, glancing dubiously at the heavy banked clouds in the sky. "We are trapped. Tomorrow the prairie will be muddy and our tracks will be printed as plainly as in snow. With horses they will catch us in an hour. We can neither stay here nor leave afoot. Our only chance is to get a mount apiece tonight and stampede the other sorrels."

Quickly he made the Assiniboines agree. For the remainder of the afternoon, parties came and went, searching up and down the creek for signs. A double guard was put over the horses. The outlying scouts were called in to help find the hidden enemy. The camp was a hornet's nest.

When jet-black night had fallen, Yarcum gave the word to leave the covert. They started across the creek and straight for the corral. The Sioux had flung out several rings of night sentries. A dozen times the merest rustle of grass would have betrayed the party.

They had almost reached the corral when, low in the west from where the clouds were driving, a livid white snake jumped from horizon to zenith, lighting up the prairie for a long second. In that instant Yarcum, several steps ahead, saw with horror that the Sioux had discovered him. A knot of a dozen warriors leaped out of the tall grass.

That his Assiniboines might scatter and escape, he hesitated long enough to fire both barrels of his pistol into the Sioux. That split-second saved the Assiniboines from instant capture, but Yarcum paid heavily. He leaped aside as the blackness fell like a stifling blanket. Before he could escape, he was seized. He struck with clenched fists, landing like the smack of board against canvas. But he was dragged down, bound, and carried up the gravel terrace to the Sioux camp.

"I CAME alone!" Yarcum said stubbornly.

"Liar!" the Sioux sub-chief repeated, with a kick. "Liar! You shot five antelope

for yourself to eat. You dared to come alone, Long-Knife, to our camp."

Yarcum answered sneer with sneer. "You bustle about in numbers like the leaves, Sioux, and your talk is like the wind that scatters them. When was an Assiniboine not a match for three of you, or a Long-Knife for six?"

The sub-chief thrust his ochred face close to Yarcum.

"Your lips may be tight, but my circle of warriors is tighter. This morning we have looked on the muddy prairie for tracks and found none. My warriors are searching the swamp. If they do not find your men, we fire the prairie."

In spite of his steeled effort, Yarcum started at mention of the marsh.

The sub-chief observed.

"Until the Assiniboines are brought in, we will amuse ourselves with you!" he taunted.

At a word two warriors stripped Yarcum of his clothes and cut his bonds. He knew they wanted him to break and run, so that they could cut him with withes and bruise him with their unstrung bows. He stood defiant. In his mind a scheme had formed like a flash. He meant to snatch the sub-chief's pistol and cheat the fiends of their yelling delight in a long torture.

His chance came. The sub-chief, angered by his refusal to run, stepped forward and struck him with his long ash bow. Yarcum tensed like a cat, leaped at the Sioux, and tore the pistol from his belt. But a warrior, watching closely, hit his wrist and knocked the pistol in the dust. The sub-chief stooped and seized it.

"You will have it!" he promised viciously.

Withdrawing the ball, he stepped within a yard and fired the stinging powder charge into Yarcum's breast. It was a signal for an onslaught with bow strings that drew blood and clubs that laid blue welts across his back. When they finished, to save the best of his suffering for the fire and horses, he saw through a red mist and barely could stand.

In a lull a warrior stepped up to the sub-chief. Yarcum heard. They took no pains to keep him from hearing. The Assiniboines were not in the marsh. Their hiding place in the willows had been discovered but the five warriors had vanished.

Before they bound him, he brushed his hand across his blurred eyes for a long look at the prairie. Its tall grasses undulated from a slight breeze. Illimitable; warm under the September sun and refreshed by the rain, it was ineffably beautiful. High over the hills a bald eagle hovered motionless, watching for an antelope fawn. Small lacy clouds, aftermath of the night's storm, were fading into the sky-blue. A small flock of cranes, migrating leisurely with the west prong of their V half as long as the east, flackered slowly down the creek. In the prairion the sorrel mounts were grazing, watched from a knoll by three young Sioux. Antelopes, countless from the camp's elevation, stood head and shoulders out of the grass. They were all about the prairion, pasturing undisturbed, neighborly with the horses, and tame almost as barnyard animals.

Yarcum looked twice at the pasture, the horses and the antelopes nosing around them. Something was happening down there; something which the Sioux, even the three herdsmen—all eyes for the torture—did not perceive. Five of the antelopes seemed to be feeding unusually close to the hobbled sorrels. They were going quickly from horse to horse. The other antelopes grazed in one spot or moved slowly, and were not so friendly.

The Sioux around Yarcum saw his stare, and followed his eyes to the prairion.

A strange thing happened. At one instant, five antelopes sprang upon five horses with whoop and stampeding halloo. One horse and antelope rider swept ahead out of the prairion. Keeping close to the foot of the camp hill, he galloped off up the creek. In behind the horses, with frenzied yells, three other riders terrified the herd and swept it after the leader.

The Sioux were dumfounded for an instant. But an instant only. They seized their guns, ran half-way down the slope, and rained bullets at the antelope riders. Several horses fell, but the main body and the four horsemen galloped past.

Just beyond bullet range, one of the horsemen, who had a second mount in leash, began to sway in his seat. He fell. His mount galloped on with the herd. The yelling Sioux dashed down the hill.

Then Yarcum saw the fifth rider, unnoticed before, tear up the gravel terrace

toward him. The Sioux saw, too. Part of them, with musket balls in their teeth, started back. Yarcum was dragged upon the horse. The swift sorrel took its double burden beyond bullet-range before muskets could be reloaded. The rider who had swayed and fallen, remounted with astonishing agility. He swerved to meet his two comrades on the single mount; and the three raced after the dust-cloud rolling north.

When the Sioux were behind, the man whose waist Yarcum's arm encircled removed the antelope headskin and horns, and looked around.

Yarcum saw the stolid, impassive face of Ugly Deer. The Indian's eyes were twinkling.

"A Sioux with a bridle finds a horse," he chuckled. "An Assiniboine finds horse *and* bridle!"

FACTOR McFAYLE, spyglass in hand, stood on the dwelling house roof, anxiously sweeping the brown horizon to the south, and calling quick orders to his scurrying garrison. Into the stockade gate Assiniboine women and children poured pell-mell, cursed by the French-Canadians who were loading the fort howitzers and feverishly getting the post ready for the assault.

An hour before, an Assiniboine hunter had rocketed into camp with a tale of having seen at least a thousand Sioux on their sorrel mounts, riding swiftly up the valley, straight as an arrow for the fort. He had seen them at close range, escaped them by a miracle. They were painted and befeathered for war; picked fighters all of them, each bestride a foaming sorrel.

Crouched on the roof edge, McFayle was focusing his glass vigorously, as if it were playing tricks with him. Suddenly, as the moving band reappeared on a swell a mile closer, he straightened up, flung away the glass with a whoop which a Sioux might envy, and took a step forward. It plunged him off the roof.

He noticed it not at all, but broke for the bastion gate, flung it open, and ran outside. Indians and French-Canadians followed. The sorrel cavalcade drew up, a bow-shot away, and six riders, unrecognizable from dirt and grime, lumbered off.

A Canadian let loose a string of "S'pristi's!"

"B'Gar!" he yelled, "eet ees M'sieur Yarcum an' hees five *soldats!*"

"YOU speak lightly of a thing most important," said the Factor, after Yarcum had eaten and they were starting for the council lodge. "You have opened the trade route to a domain half as large as our Canadian territory. With the Missouri tribes armed, the power of the Sioux between Red River and *Riviere la Souris* will be broken. From the Mandanes village you can direct the fur trading this winter. I'll send an account of your doings to the Montreal Partners. Next spring, you will come up with the Missouri furs and take them East to La Grande Portage. From there you will have time for a trip to Montreal. Factorship at the post of your choice will be a certainty. If the Partners receive you with arms open, what else can a Partner's daughter do?"

Yarcum did not answer, but under his bronze he flushed deeply.

"What happened," he asked after a moment, "with the three young *siches* intended for these Assiniboines of mine?"

McFayle's countenance darkened.

"Married!"

"Married?" Yarcum groaned. "We rode night and day to get here before the Cree sub-chief came for them."

"He came two days after you left. But his sons did not marry them after all."

"What? Who did then?"

"Old Kawkawak! He had four wives already but he married the three young squaws."

"He should be shot, the old devil!" Yarcum rasped.

"It is an Indian custom. He can have ten wives if he chooses." And then McFayle grinned. "But yesterday he sent word that seven wives is too many. That the three young ones talk like the constant twitter of snowbirds and he will gladly give them up to Ugly Deer and Squeaky Oak and to Black Beaver. . . ."

Yarcum laughed and struck McFayle on his buckskin shoulder. "Good. I go to tell my antelopes. They will be glad."

# Walker's Wildmen

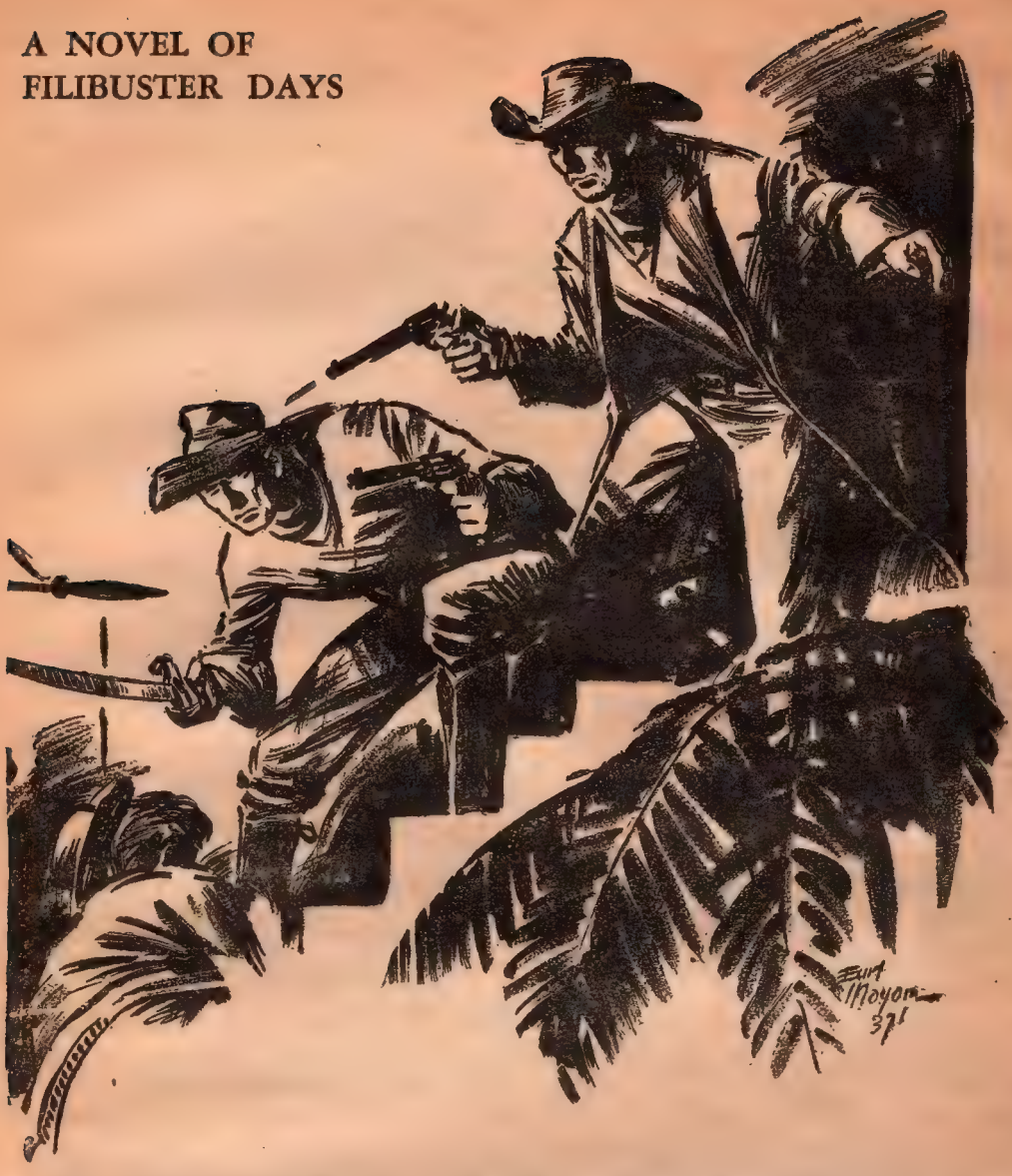
By CAPTAIN WINFIELD CARTER

JEFF FORBY lounged down the single street of Virgin Bay in the thick Nicaraguan twilight. Others of the passengers for California were in the street, going from one drinking place to another; nearly two hundred wild young men, bound for the gold fields. Most of them were well under thirty. The majority wore the low-crowned sombrero, red flannel shirt, jeans pants and high boots of the miner.

Their belts sagged with Colt and bowie. Quick-tempered, good-natured, hard-working and hard-living—it was better to tickle than to pound these. And outwardly, Jeff Forby the tall Texan was like any of them. . . .

But they were California-bound across

A NOVEL OF
FILIBUSTER DAYS




**"I'm bound for Californy . . ." The siren song swept the Isthmus, but there was an undertone—the tramp of Billy Walker's filibuster legion—and the tall Texan forsook fortune's lure for the wild, red rip of battle!**

Nicaragua, hunting gold. The tall Texan went to California to find a man.

"California . . ." he meditated, hitching up the twin .47 Colts a little. "California—an' kill Matt Stance. . . ."

It was a long and weary trail that had led him up from the Rio Grande to investigate his father's murder. From the Forby ranch across Texas, into Louisiana; from New Orleans to California via Vanderbilt's Transit Route. Always far behind that cowardly killer and thief, his father's rascally partner, Matt Stance.

"But he got this far!" Jeff said to himself, shouldering through the press about a cantina-door. "The agent here says he come by the *Sierra* three months back. So I'm still on his trail. . . ."

He went on, shaking his head when fellow-passengers yelled at him to come in and have a drink. Clear down to the wind-rippled edge of Lake Nicaragua he wandered. Then he turned restlessly back, a lean, six foot tall figure, with grim brown

face and harrowed hazel eyes and hands that hung habitually close to the white butts of the Colts.

A MAN came hurrying toward him in the dusk. Jeff saw him and recognized him presently—one Fears. A shifty-eyed and furtive little figure who was a clever monte-dealer. Fears stopped with a grunt of satisfaction. Jeff stared at him coldly. He liked the little gambler not at all.

"Well, I been lookin' all over for ye! Damme if I ain't tromped my heels half-off, huntin' ye, Forby. Old man Majors an' his pretty gal, they want to see ye about somethin'. How come ye got her so worked up about ye—an' nobody else from New York to here been able to get a pleasant look out o' her? Well, anyway, I told her I'd find ye if ye was half-sober, an' bring ye. . . ."

"Did she say what it was about?" Jeff frowned.

"Didn't say. Well, ye comin'? If I can take your place—"

Jeff growled and went with Fears up the sandy track.

Old Majors was a printer, emigrating to California with his slender, quiet daughter. On the way from New Orleans, Jeff had been in a way adopted by Majors. He wondered, though, what the old boy wanted of him, this evening. He was not in a mood for talk. The thought of Matt Stance clung with him. He wanted to walk and brood.

They came presently, at the very edge of the Transit village, to a cabin set somewhat apart from other dwellings. Jeff could see the cheerful light coming through cracks in the pole-walls near the rear. Fears jerked a thumb toward the dark doorway and stopped.

Jeff ducked to step inside. In that instant, he knew that he had been tricked. For there was a double-tug at his belt, from behind. His Colts were jerked from their holsters. Then Fears butted him heavily between the shoulder-blades. He was driven forward, to stumble inside and fall flat.

There was a swish in the air above him. Like the path of a club, he thought flashingly and instinctively. Only his fall had saved him from that blow. But he was a gentleman of a good deal of experience in situations such as this. For his section of Texas was one of heavy-hitting, two-fisted men. So he had barely touched the floor, had no more than identified that whizzing sound, before he was in the fight and grimly resolved to leave his mark.

He came to a squatting position and from its sheath between his shoulder blades he whipped the long bowie knife. He struck out savagely and felt the knife sheathe itself in flesh. He jerked it free and came to his full height in a tigerish leap. He struck again in the same direction and a knife-point licked his forearm. But someone groaned in the darkness and Jeff heard a heavy thud on the dirt floor. Someone was down.

BUT there were several men in that cabin and their eyes were doubtless more accustomed to the darkness. They came at him in a rush and fought him back, back, until he felt the pole-wall against his shoulders. His knife was clicking against other knives, against clubs that miraculously failed to find him.

He had paid so little attention to Fears, on the steamer, that he could not remember with whom the little gambler had been intimate. So he had no idea who these attackers were. Nor could he know their reason for luring him here and trying to drop him dead on the dirt floor. But the Forbys had a way of settling their debts. So, now, in the hot darkness of the hut, Jeff Forby fought like a wild man for two reasons. Because he would not be stopped this side of California and Matt Stance, and because it was natural for him to fight so.

He slid like a big cat, sidewise along the wall. They were pounding the poles in their murderous search for him. Grimly, he thought that there must be a dozen of them, judging from the tattoo they were beating on the wall. He rushed in and caught a man by the neck. The fellow cried out and jerked up a knee. Instinctively, Jeff avoided it and struck hard with the bowie, but landed only on the assassin's arm. The man cried out again.

"Ye damned fools! It's me ye're knifin'. . . .

He went limp in Jeff's grip and sagged to the floor. Jeff jumped back and stum-

bled over a stool. They located him by the sound and he took hard blows on the head and shoulders before he could regain his balance and take the war to them.

A pistol flamed in the darkness. A bullet buzzed spitefully across the room and thudded in the wall. Then Jeff picked up the stool over which he had nearly fallen. It was a heavy thing and made a terrible club. He swung it, desperately, using the bowie in his left hand when someone crowded him.

But there were too many of them. He could not guard against attack from the rear. He knew that he was losing, even though men went down and failed to rise again. Then, from the doorway, came a stentorian yell.

"Jeff Forby! Jeff Forby! Where you? Keep yo' tail over the dashboard, boy! I'm comin' in—an' when Comanche Carruthers comes in, deserts spread out behind him! Yeeeooow!"

WITH the wild cowboy yell, there was the impact of something like a tornado, striking the men who pressed in around Jeff. He had his second wind and the eager savagery in the voice of the unknown who called himself "Comanche Carruthers" was infectious. He swung around him with the stool again. It cracked upon heads and bodies. Men went down. Pistols were flaming here and there. Lead sang across that constricted space like hornets humming.

"Yeeeooow!" the unknown yelled. "Remember Rivas! Yeeeooow!"

There was a final mad rush. Jeff was tripped and men trampled on him. He caught an ankle and jerked one down; battered him with the club as they rolled on the hard-packed earth. Then there was a sudden quiet, falling with magical swiftness.

"Jeff Forby!" the voice cried—anxiously, this time. "You hurted? Speak up, boy!"

"Nah! I'm all right!" Jeff answered, getting up.

"I'm goin' to make a light," his unknown friend grunted. There was a click and a glare and Jeff, staring curiously, saw a black-haired, fierce-eyed, pallid man holding an improvised torch. He was fully five inches above six feet and Jeff's flashing glance placed him as a frontiersman. He wore moccasins instead of boots and held a dripping bowie-knife in his left hand.

"Well, sir!" Comanche Carruthers grinned, Indian-like black eyes narrowed as he glanced from Jeff to the bodies on the floor. "Well, sir! Looks like we wruck some havoc!"

He moved over to a rude lamp of coconut shell on a projection of the wall and put his torch to the floating wick. In the flickering glare of this light, they surveyed the scene. There were five men on the floor. Only one moved at all and he but weakly. Jeff recognized them all as men of the passenger-list, the roughest of his fellows.

"You!" he snarled abruptly, crossing to the man who moved his head feebly. "Crowfoot! What's the idee in this business! Answer up or—*por dios!*—I'll cut your heart out an' hold it up for you to look at."

Carruthers produced a canteen. He bent over Crowfoot and poured *agua ardiente* between the man's bearded lips. Crowfoot opened his pale eyes wide and looked with a sort of grim humor at Jeff Forby.

"Twenty dollars for my share o' liftin' your hair!" he whispered. "Figger that, will you! When Fears come along an' says this fella Eggitts wants you downed here in Virgin Bay, it looked like findin' the twenty in the road!"

"Eggitts?" Jeff scowled, puzzled. "Who's Eggitts? What did he want me wiped out about?"

"He's some fella livin' here for the time bein'. He knows you, whether you know him or not! Knows you well enough that when he happened to catch sight o' you today, he got dam' skeered. He hired Fears to put a gang onto your neck. Fears drug me into the deal—damn his careful soul! I bet he got out of this with a whole skin."

"Did you see this Eggitts? What kind o' looker was he? You say he's hangin' out in Nicaragua these days? He happens to be one o' this Colonel Walker's Americans that're fightin' on the side o' the Democrats against the Legitimists?"

"I dunno'. Never see him, myself. But Fears had knowed him in Kentucky. I think he—he's—

HIS face twisted abruptly. Cold perspiration suddenly twinkled beadlike on his forehead. His head sagged on limp neck. Whatever it was Crowfoot thought, it would not be revealed in Virgin Bay—or anywhere else in this world.

"What kind o' looker is this Fears he mentioned?" Comanche Carruthers grunted. "I snagged a li'l sneaky-lookin' fella at the door when I come up. Same one you was walkin' with, comin' toward here. I see you an' come trailin' you. For I says to myself, 'Yander goes a boy a'walkin' like Red Roy Forby. Must be his boy Jeff that Red Roy was tellin' me about, a couple year back when I was in Texas.' So I come along, to augur with you a spell. An' when you got inside, hell just about bus' loose. . . ."

"I certainly do owe you one!" Jeff nodded heartily. "I was about to cash in when you let out that war-whoop from the door. You was a friend o' Red Roy's—my dad's. Well, he is dead. . . . Murdered by his partner, a fella named Matthew Stance. Shot in the back. Stance hightailed for California."

Then he scowled down at Crowfoot. Eggitts. . . . An old frend of Fears. . . . Now, who could that be? He could think of nobody who would pay for his death—except Matt Stance. And according to the Accessory Transit Company's agent here Matt Stance had gone on to California, three months before. He wondered if Stance could have left someone here to bushwack him.

"Tell you what!" Comanche grunted. "Why don't you throw in with Uncle Billy? Colonel William Walker, that is. I come down to recruit. Walker'll be here with fifty-odd o' the saltiest cases ever you see, around mornin'. We been in Nicaragua since June. Come down from San Francisco.

"General Corral is boss o' the Legitimist Party. We aim to help the Democrats tumble him proper. That's what Walker's comin' here now, for. To attack the town o' Rivas where the Legitimist general—Guardiola, the Butcher—has got a garrison. This is our second battle at Rivas. The native Democrats run off an' left us Fifty-Six Immortals to fight the whole Legitimist Army, last time. We aim to wipe out that li'l score, this time. Come along, Jeff! You're a fightin' fool an' you'll find plenty o' the same, amongst us!"

"I got other things to do," Jeff said impatiently. "I am goin' to California. . . ."

'Well. . . . You hear that racket up the street? Cushing has got his mules in, to carry the passengers to San Juan del Sur. I told him that Walker's a-comin' an' he wants to have the passengers out o' the village before our gang—*La Falange Americana,* the American Phalanx—come in. So you got to hightail. But, I hear what this Crowfoot says an' it's bad business to leave an enemy on the back-trail. . . ."

"He said this Eggitts was livin' here . . ." Jeff pondered, while in the street the sound of milling passengers grew louder. "Hell! I reckon I got to miss this steamer. Nobody's goin' to sick hired bushwackers onto me an' grin about it! Comanche, I'm goin' to take up a claim an' hang around a while. I'm not joinin' this bunch o' yours. My job's to gather in Mr. Eggitts. When I do that, I'll go on to San Francico an'—Well, I'll go on."

Together, they watched the hurly-burly of the departing passengers. Evidently, none had been persuaded by Comanche Carruthers' recruiting-talks to give over gold-hunting in California for lead-hunting in Nicaragua. Whooping and yelling, reeling in the saddles or in the rough coaches provided by Cushing, the Transit Company's agent, they went out of Virgin Bay, heading for San Juan on the Pacific.

Jeff caught one glimpse of the Majors. Nora's head was turning from right to left, as if she searched for someone. Her father was invisible in the dusk of the carriage. Jeff grinned at sight of the girl. He started to move across and tell them good-bye. But that would mean talk and he was not in a mood for it. So he waved—as if they could see him.

## II

COMANCHE and Jeff squatted, blanket-wrapped like two Indians, on a dirt-floored veranda. They were waiting for the coming of the dawn—and William Walker.

"We landed at San Juan off the *Vesta* brig, yesterday," Comanche grunted.

"Fifty-four o' us American soldiers o' fortune. Two hundred native Democrat soldiers under Colonel Chélon Valle. 'Chélon-of-the-Stiff-Knee,' they call Valle. An' there's a Prooshian officer named Bruno von Natzmer, too. A fightin' fool, Von is. We will certainly smack Rivas a lick, this time. With Chélon commandin' 'em, our native Democrats won't run off an' leave us fightin' fifty-to-one, this time."

Dawn came draggingly. There was the tiniest flush over the mountains across Lake Nicaragua, while yet darkness was shrouding the shabby little village and, as if that narrow gleam were a signal, they heard the faraway pad-pad of many feet, on the Transit Road, coming from the direction of the Pacific seaport of San Juan del Sur.

"Come the boys!" Comanche grunted. "Jeff—you want to see some right salty hairpins, you just stand by to look at *La Falange Americana,* now! They've shined up their front-sights an' throwed their spurs away!"

Presently, a mass of gigantic figures materialized at the western end of Virgin Bay. The group seemed to melt and disappear with the soundlessness of shadows, to prowl about the village of the Transit Company. More came and yet more. One huge shape slid into the veranda where Comanche and Jeff waited. He saw them instantly and his rifle jumped a little.

*"Quien son?"* he snarled fiercely. "Answer up, you dam' tamale-guzzlers, or I'll slam a slug into you!"

"Yeh?" drawled Comanche amusedly. "who you callin' tamale-guzzlers, Bull Lamar? Where's Uncle Billy?"

"Might've known you'd be around some'r's, poppin' up like a dam' jumpin' jack," Bull Lamar grunted. "Orders is, to clean out the village an' I see you two scroochin' in here. Why, I reckon Uncle Billy's back along the line a way, givin' Chélon hell for not keepin' up. You see anything o' Guardiola along the road, Comanche? Me, I shore do want to git a glimpse o' the Butcher—over my front-sight."

Dawn came, then, a rush and whirl of color in the eastern sky. Comanche and Jeff moved along the sandy street. They could make out the details of the scene, now. At the far end of the village were the native soldiers of the Democratic party, coming in out of the jungle. But at this end were the burly, swaggering redshirts. They carried rifles carelessly across thick arms. Their belts sagged with the Colt or Remington six-shooters and with their bowies.

COMANCHE was greeted all along the street by wolf-howls. Jeff began to understand that this huge Texan was a personage, even in this efficient company of hard-fighting men. He grew more and more curious to see the little man of whom he had heard so much—Walker, who had almost captured the Mexican state of Lower California, the year before. At last, they found him on Cushing's veranda.

"My—stars!" cried Jeff amazedly, at sight of Walker. "You—You don't tell me that's Walker, Comanche!"

"Ne' mind," Comanche grinned. "He looks like that to ever'body, at first. But, boy, I was with Jack Hays' Texas Rangers, durin' the Mex War. I was with Ewen Cameron's Cowboys. An' I'm tellin' you, plain an' flat, that for fancy an' assorted brands o' fightin', you can lay yo' bets on Uncle Billy an' go off an' leave 'em till collectin' time. You got a heap to learn about that pint-size man."

But Jeff shook his head slowly as he stared. That five-foot tall, less than a hundred pounds, pale-faced figure, draped from neck to heels in tattered linen duster, wearing ancient, dusty-black slouch hat—William Walker?

It was downright impossible! He looked around at the big men of *La Falange Americana.* Such as they, led by this tiny figure whom any of them could have broken across a knee? He couldn't believe it. It was so, but nonetheless he couldn't believe it. Then Walker turned a little. . . .

Jeff stared up into the pale, smooth-shaven face, with its harsh-lined, rather coarse-lipped, mouth. But only one feature of William Walker ever held anyone's attention for more than a second.

So, Jeff's gaze lifted to the round, hawk-steady, steely eyes of the little Man of Destiny. He felt as if he had received an electric shock. He could not pull his own eyes away. He had the fancy that Walker's eyes bored through him like points of

fire; that nothing about him could be hidden from this little man. He stood, like one in a trance.

"Who is this, Carruthers?" Walker inquired of Comanche in low, rather husky, voice. "A recruit? I hope so."

"No. . . . I'm just lookin' for a man, Colonel," Jeff answered for himself. "Fella named Eggitts. Thought he might turn up as one o' your outfit. He was here in Virgin Bay, I know, yesterday."

"There's no such name on my muster roll. But there are some Americans of civilian-status, in Nicaragua. Possibly he's among them. But—if I know fighting-men and I believe that I do, having associated with such as these, so long—you should be interested in enlisting in my command."

JEFF grinned, but shook his head stubbornly:

"I certainly do like what I've seen an' heard o' this outfit—an' you, Colonel. But I am not a free man. If I was you wouldn't have to say 'join up' twice. But I have got a job o' findin' this fella Eggitts, first. Then my trail is broke for me, away from Nicaragua. It leads to California."

"And to—a man. . . ." Walker nodded. "Yes—to a man."

Then his rare smile flashed.

"But, at any rate, I think that you'll fight with us, this once. My scouts have just come in with word that Guardiola, the Butcher, disdains to wait for us behind Rivas' barricades. He will hurl us back over the Transit Road, back to San Juan del Sur. His Legitimists will drive us into the Pacific, slaughtering us as we wallow in the surf. He—what are you laughing for, Comanche?"

"Nothin'," Comanche grinned. "I must've bumped my funny bone, Uncle Billy. What else does Guardiola aim to do?"

"Well, he is marching upon us, with six hundred picked men. The very flower of the Legitimist forces. I choose to make my stand here. So, you who follow the vengeance-trail, will you withdraw and watch us fight, or—"

"Oh, I'll dance a few, I reckon, while you-all are pattin' out the time," Jeff grinned. "It won't really interfere with my plans any that I can think of."

Comanche slapped him on the back and led him off to the improvised field-kitchens. Native women had been rousted out of the village's houses, to make breakfast for the Democratic force.

Around the beehive-shaped mud ovens in the dooryards, Chélon Valle's natives and the big, loud-voiced Americans were squatting. They had gourds of hot chocolate, sweetened with crude brown sugar. Black beans and rice and tough dried beef, tortillas and roasted plantains, made the breakfast-menu.

"Set down an' light in," Comanche grinned at Jeff. "I'll find you a Springfield an' come back. See you got Colts an' yo' knife."

He came back with the rifle and an ample supply of ammunition. With his crammed mouth, he identified figures for Jeff:

"Look around at them boys! Salty cases, salty cases. See that baby-face yander? One that stands about knee-high to a sawed-off rifle? That's Gay. Lieutenant Gay. Got about as much idee o' what *ought* to skeer him as—as pigs has about frock coats! Yes, sir!

"That ganglin' six-footer with the gray billygoat whiskers, that's Colonel C. C. Hornsby. He skirmished around in the Mex War, same as me. Nothin' fancy about Hornsby's look. But I *have* seen him eatin' with one hand an' shooting with t' other. An' managin' to do a right good job at both.

"That big Irish boy beyond him, that's Cal O'Neal. He would any time ruther fight than eat. An' you don't see Cal missin' his meals what you could call frequent. Nahsir!

"The school-teacherish lookin' fella talkin' to Cal, is Cap'n Doubleday. He don't rightly belong to *La Falange*. He is American-naturalized, but Englishman born. He was already down here, a-fightin' with the Democrats, when we landed at Realejo in June.

"He come along today to tell us what he can about this native-style scrappin'—an' because he couldn't stay out o' the neighborhood, when there was a chance o' scrappin'. Doubleday, he's educated. His thoughts just come in herds, like. Yeh. . . . He can talk like a Senator—but he can fight like a catamount."

"YAAAAY!" some Falangino yelled. "Ye-all better git set to run. Don't pack no extry weights. Guardiola, he's comin' all primed for ye. Goin' to run ye clean back to San Juan an' make ye swim. No prisoners, neither. Guardiola ain't goin' to take none. Goin' to stick us like we was li'l shotes, he is."

As Jeff and Comanche finished their meal, there came a sudden crisp rattle of musketry, out on the Transit Road to the west of the village. Here, Jeff had noted, native soldiers of that big, fierce-grinning, limping Colonel-Chélon-of-the-Stiff-Knee had been picketed. They were masked from view of Virgin Bay by thick greenery. The firing swelled and diminished, rose and fell. The crackling of it drowned all other sound.

From the jungle-edge now came the native outpost, falling back coolly upon Walker's main body. They fired at some unseen target as they retreated slowly, halting for a volley. Then reloading they fell back, halting for another volley. Good timber, those natives; steady fighters.

Jeff and Comanche, grinning fiercely, came to their feet with the rest of the Falanginos. They raced toward that little group in which gleamed the yellow linen duster of Walker. Ahead of them bounded a gaunt, fierce, yellow mongrel, Filibuster, the warrior-mascot of the American Phalanx.

"Colonel Valle!" Walker called to the limping Chélon. "Hold our center, on the road. Send thirty of your natives, to keep the palisades on the left flank. Put Colonel Montez in command there. He wanted to show us how a Mexican can fight and we'll give him opportunity.

"Lieutenant Gay! With ten riflemen, you will occupy the rising ground on our right. Fire at will.

"Colonel Hornsby! *La Falange* falls in here, with me!"

Jeff looked quickly down at the hang of his Colts, inspected the Springfield Comanche had given him. He looked up and met the huge Texan's fierce, expectant grin.

"As well have joined us, huh?" Comanche yelled.

The designated units of the Democrats had hurled themselves into the positions indicated by Walker. Now, the van of the Legitimist force burst from the jungle, to right and left of the Transit Road.

Walker's men stood quietly, awaiting the command. But Guardiola's troops seemed shocked by this sudden encounter. They threw up their muskets. With the flash and roar of the firing, a ragged volley, fired in excitement, went whining harmlessly over the Americans.

Jeff looked curiously at Walker. Himself, he had been through much go-as-you-please fighting, along the Rio Grande in Texas, against cattle-thieves and Indians. He knew a warrior when he saw him. So he was interested to mark how this tiny doctor-lawyer-editor-soldier stood as if battle and sudden death were a thousand miles away from him; with Colt-gripping hands dangling limply at his sides.

Then, suddenly, he saw the steel-gray eyes begin to glow like fire-opals. He stiffened, glancing from Walker to the van of the Legitimists and back again. Walker's right hand shot high overhead. His voice rang like a bell, penetrating the noise of the field.

"American Phalanx, forward—march! *Remember Rivas!*"

Jeff looked swiftly back to the enemy. The jungle-edge was black with Legitimist soldiery. *La Falange Americana* drew a deep breath, shifted rifles, stepped out briskly.

## III

THERE was a thrill to it! Jeff looked at those massed Legitimist soldiers, with the black-coated officers on horseback looming above the ranks, with hostility. His lean face tightened, hazel eyes began to shine. It was the expression which certain Mexicans knew and certain other Mexicans *had* known. They would have said that The Tall Texan was wearing his fighting-face.

Out upon the Transit Road, leaving the palisades of Virgin Bay behind, *La Falange Americana* went at the quickstep. On Jeff's left was a freckled, red-headed, bow-legged youngster. He could hardly wait for the word of command.

The soldiers of the Legitimist party were deploying, now, to envelop the village. Walker's arm jerked stiffly aloft.

"Left—oblique!" he ordered. The com-

mand cut like a knife through all the noises of the field. *"Fire!"*

They were within fifty yards of the Legitimists, when the order came. Volley after volley the grim *Falanginos* poured into the close-packed Legitimist ranks. And this was virtually point-blank range, for those tall, sharpshooting redshirts. Five volleys, in all, they fired like some deadly machine. Walker snapped a command. They wheeled.

"Run, niggah, run! Paterolleh catch you!

"Run, niggah, run! It's almost day!"

Comanche Carruthers was chanting the old slave-song sardonically. Others in the ranks picked it up. The lines of the enemy had been shattered; had reformed under the lashing whips the Legitimist officers carried; then shattered again.

Guardiola was a fierce figure, glimpsed for a moment through the swirling mass as his soldiers reeled back with each volley. He was like a madman when for the fifth time his men broke.

The *Falanginos* were back behind Chélon's waiting troops, before Guardiola and his officers could reform the tattered ranks after the fifth hail of American lead.

Up and down raged Guardiola and his lieutenants, the dogwhips rising and falling savagely, beating the soldiers back into ranks. It was hard. Only once before had Central America known such deadly shooting—at the first battle of Rivas when this same handful had almost taken the town with odds of twenty to one against them.

The enemy steadied. The firing rolled like a drum along the whole front. Jeff looked to right and left and fidgeted. He wanted more action. He had quite forgotten that he was a mere volunteer for a day. These were the sort of men to battle beside.

The big Mexican officer whom Chélon had sent to hold the left flank was raging up and down. His embroidered sombrero was hanging down his back by the chin-strap. He had a sword in one hand, a pistol in the other. He was screaming like a tiger. Killing like a tiger, too.

DOGGEDLY, the Legitimist officers were hurling their men against the palisades and charge after charge went reeling back before his big Mexican's defense. Jeff leaped forward as a larger wave of attackers gained the top of the palisade. A man sprang down from the top and the Mexican's arm stiffened, as he held up his long Toledo. The jumping one was spitted upon the blade. The Mexican officer jerked the sword free and shot down two more Legitimists who rushed at him.

Jeff was dimly conscious of a shout from Walker. Then he found himself beside others, ten in all, who detached themselves from the main body of La Falange and rushed to the assistance of the native Democrats on the left.

A hundred of the Legitimists had got inside the barrier, now. The reinforcing party sprang at them.

"Yaaaiiiah! Yaaaaiiiaaah!" the redhead on Jeff's left hand yelled. Like one voice, the yell sounded, as all ten of them made of it their war-cry.

Jeff shot his pistols empty. Unconsciously, he had dropped his emptied rifle. He ducked in under the machete-blow of a squat man before him ducking under the humming side-stroke that would have sheared head from shoulders. He caught a thick arm and jerked. The man was thrown off-balance; nearly dropped his wicked-bladed weapon.

He was powerful. Jeff strained to hold him close so that the machete could not be used. Inch by inch, he worked his hand and arm upward until he could encircle the thick neck. The Legitimist's snarling face was almost against his.

Then Jeff tightened the hugging arm about the fellow's neck. He jerked up a foot, hooked the leg over the native's machete arm. He stiffened his shoulder abruptly and the Legitimist's head rolled suddenly sideway, with a dull cracking sound. He collapsed.

But he was in the very middle of a free-for-all in which it was hard to tell friend from enemy. Half he saw, half he sensed, a blow coming down behind him as he straightened over the body of the man he had killed. He jumped sideway like a jaguar, turning in air to land facing a black-coated officer who swung a heavy saber.

There was a rifle on the ground at his feet. The officer was leaping toward him,

teeth shining fiercely through thick, parted lips. Jeff scooped up the rifle and hurled it. It caught the swordsman in the face and snapped his head back. Jeff wiped the knife from his belt and jumped in. Somebody shot the officer before he could reach him.

"REMEMBER Rivas!" he heard someone yelling from the thick of a mêlée beyond him. "Yaaaiiiaaah! Remember Rivas!"

It sounded like Comanche Carruthers' voice, thick with strain and much shouting. He took time to reload his Colts, then plunged toward the voice. There was a press of Legitimists as solid as a wall. He fired and fired again, muzzle pressed against the bodies of the enemy. Men crumpled where they stood. He was dimly-conscious of blows struck at him; of shots fired at range so close that the powder stung through his clothing.

But he ducked and fired and when his guns were empty, used the long barrels as clubs. Always he worked into the center of that throng. And he came to where Comanche stood—a moving statue of War Incarnate, naked to the waist, hatless, swinging the stockless remnant of a Springfield like a terrible scythe of death, sounding his battle-yell in panting, inhuman voice.

"Give 'em hell!" yelled Jeff. "Give 'em hell!"

It was to be a battle-cry for *La Falange Americana* in other days, other battles, to come. Before those who ringed Comanche about—not too closely, though!—knew what was behind them, the leaping bowie and the crashing barrel of a Colt were tearing at their ranks.

They whirled—those who had not been struck. Perhaps none of these men of Guardiola had faced Americans before. Weapons and manner of fighting, both, were strange. They swung machetes, bayonet-tipped rifles, clubbed muskets. But Comanche took advantage of the diversion to assault them with his terrible club of iron that smashed skulls like egg shells. Jeff drove his blade with left hand and swung at their heads with the Colt in his right.

Others were coming, blasting a way with the Colts and the Springfields; others as tall and as terrible as these two raging madmen. It was not in the herded Legitimists to face battlers of the caliber of Walker's supermen. They flinched and began to give ground, forgetting their numerical advantage over this handful of redshirts.

"A Chélon! A Chélon! A Chélon!" a savage voice bellowed.

The old limping native was bringing up more men. Back and back the Democrats pushed the Legitimists, until the men of Guardiola here fought desperately with backs against the palisades they had come over so eagerly.

Their front was chopped to pieces, torn by the whining lead at point-blank range. They began to turn and try scaling the palisades. They threw down their weapons, but in the hurly-burly of that mad battle it was near impossible to see if a man held machete or musket or had dropped them.

Old "Chélon-of-the-Stiff-Knee" was giving his battle-cry in a mighty booming, while the machete in his big fists cut Legitimist heads from the shoulders. The men of Guardiola were suddenly either on the palisade-top, dropping over to the outside, or they lay dead or wounded within the barrier.

As they paused to drag air into lungs that pumped like bellows, an order came from Walker, brought by a grinning, freckled trumpeter aged thirteen.

"Uncle Billy says, 'What the hell you waitin' for? Feet growed into the dirt, maybe? Over an' after 'em! Divide up, outside! Chélon'll circle an' smack 'em from one side! Americans straight ahead!' Tell him, somebody that slings the Spanish. An' git goin'. What you waitin' for? Want Uncle Billy to write you a letter? Well, his sec-tary is on leave!"

OVER the palisade, the native Democrats and the Falanginos poured. Outside, rank, green jungle enveloped them in ten yards. Chélon, crafty veteran of a hundred irregular battles, needed no second word to tell him what to do. He vanished, with the terse statement that when the Americans opened fire, *he* would be somewhere about!

Filibuster, the great yellow mongrel, came with the Americans. His jaws were

dripping red. Evidently, he had been somewhere in the battle—and fighting on his own account. He took station at the head of the tiny column and suddenly, leaped ahead, crouched for an instant, then sprang at something in a thicket. An agonized cry came from the green mask that hid him and his prey—a cry that ended in odd, bubbling noises. . . .

"There they are!" Jeff yelled, as he circled the thicket. "Yaaaiiiaaah! Remember Rivas! Give 'em hell!"

They crouched for a split-second, the grim-faced Falanginos and the sprinkling of natives beside them. Then they surged forward, with the ferocious battle-yell born that day. There were plenty of Legitimists there in the jungle—enough to have eaten this little party alive. But, taken by surprise, unnerved by the suddenness and the hot ferocity of the charge they whirled fearfully.

A man or two fell under the wild volley the Legitimists fired. Then it was hand-to-hand and no men south of the Rio Grande could face these Falanginos at that work—not without odds of more than ten to one. The roaring Colts, the flicking of now-bright, then reddened, bowies, shattered the Legitimist ranks as hail shatters glass.

Jeff saw Filibuster streak past him and into a group of natives. The great dog left the ground and bore down a man with teeth in the Legitimist's throat. The others flung up their muskets, but they could hardly tear fascinated eyes from the struggle at their very feet. Jeff crashed into them, firing right-hand, left-hand. The group crumpled.

"GIVE 'em hell!" roared Comanche. He was a berserk, with blood—not his, but Legitimists'—running down his brawny torso. The rifle-barrel rose and fell; rose and fell. Back went the Legitimists.

Not two minutes, this sheer butchery lasted. The Legitimists could not face it. They turned and fled, throwing away their arms and accoutrements in mad panic. From the center of the field the firing suddenly thickened. The Falanginos rushed that way.

They came to a stubborn battle around a group of oxcarts and a brass six-pounder. Old Chélon had plowed through the Legitimists and crashed into the picked guard about Guardiola's ammunition-carts and his one piece of artillery.

"Yaaaiiiaaah! Give 'em hell!" the Falanginos yelled and hurled themselves into the battle.

The men of Guardiola the Butcher could not tell how many came to reinforce Chélon. They turned and fled. After them natives and Americans alike followed hotly. Fear-winged as the Legitimists were, many died as they ran away.

Jeff stopped and looked around him. His lungs were bursting, he thought. There was nobody near him. He turned to go back toward the village. As he wheeled that way, a woman's voice sounded, shrill, agonized, from the jungle on the left.

"A white woman!" he thought—though he had no idea how he knew. "And—"

He forgot his weariness. Into the greenery he plunged, stumbling, nearly falling, for a hundred yards. Once more he heard the scream. Then he burst out into a little clearing.

There were two mules there and a struggling knot of figures—Legitimist soldiery and—the movements of the group showed him for a twinkling a woman's skirt.

He had picked up a rifle. He lifted his voice in the savage battle-yell of *La Falange,* as he sprang at the soldiers. They turned and one jerked up his musket. But it was empty and that man died before he could snap the trigger twice, falling with a broken skull. The others whirled and went with howls of panic into the jungle, leaving a girl standing protectively over a gray-haired man on the ground.

"You—you came just in time!" said Nora Majors.

## IV

JEFF stared at the slender figure—who looked with a gratitude almost prayerful at him. It came to him with an odd sort of detachment as he looked at her, that she was about as pretty as anything he had ever seen, with cheeks like carven ivory faintly flushed with pink; with scarlet mouth relaxed, now, from the strained line they had been.

"But—but—I thought you'd gone on—

you an' your father—with the rest o' the passengers to San Juan. I heard you scream an'—I do'no' how, but I thought about you. He hurt any?"

"Someone knocked him down. Father's mule fell lame on the road. Everyone was hurrying madly, because we had word that Guardiola the Butcher was coming this way. We fell behind.

"Then a body of native soldiers burst from the jungle ahead of us and we turned and ran from them. That was just after dawn. We've been wandering about the jungle ever since. We could hear the fighting. And those men were going to kill father and take our mules."

"We licked 'em plenty at the palisades o' the village," Jeff said absently. "Le's see, now—"

He bent over the old printer. Majors was bleeding a little from a welt on the head. There was a gourd hanging from the saddle of one of the mules. Nora Majors handed it to Jeff. When he poured water on the old man's face, Majors opened his eyes and growled.

"That's better!" Jeff grinned. "When you growled thataway, you sound right natural."

"Those scum struck me with a rifle-butt," Majors sputtered. "If I had possessed a weapon, I should have taught them a lesson. I fought in the War of 1812 and I learned a trick or two, I can tell you."

"Well, we'd best be ramblin' for Virgin Bay," Jeff suggested, grinning at Nora. "I'll help you on your mule."

They started back, the old man leading, Jeff at the head of Nora's mule. The girl looked down at him thoughtfully:

"The Tall Texan," she said. "I—wondered about you, on the steamer. The name—somehow, it seems to fit you—particularly as you look now. You had trouble in Virgin Bay, last night? Someone said so, though I didn't get the details. When I heard that, I wondered if it were the result of the talk I overheard, outside our door in the village."

"What'd you hear?" Jeff demanded fiercely, whirling to look up at her. "Who was talkin'? Fears? An' that fella they called Crowfoot, on the steamer?"

"Yes. Those two and two others—a big middle-aged man in a lawyerish-seeming suit of black, and a young, very pale-skinned native. I heard them mention your name several times. But nothing was said in my hearing to indicate the reason for their interest in you. You had trouble with them?"

"Oh—kind o'. With Fears an' Crowfoot. Big, middle-aged man, you say. . . . Brown hair an' brown eyes, heavy brown mustache an' beard?"

"THE light was dim, when they stopped outside our cabin. I looked through a window-opening. I think they saw me looking out. I had but one glimpse of them. But this man was clean-shaven. A square, forceful sort of face, it seemed. I couldn't tell the color of hair and eyes."

Curiously, she watched the grim hardening of his powder-stained, sweat-streaked face. His red flannel shirt was a merest rag across one shoulder. When he lifted a hand mechanically to his cheekbone, the muscles leaped like snakes under his skin. Farthest thing from his thoughts was his personal appearance. It would not have occurred to him that he was a magnificent specimen and one to draw any woman's eyes; to draw Nora Majors' eyes, now.

"Fears and Crowfoot are on the steamer, now, I suppose," she ventured. "These others, though, I thought them residents of the country. For the present, at any rate."

"No, Fears an' Crowfoot they—never caught the steamer. . . . They stayed in Virgin Bay. . . . Well, there's the village."

The Falanginos, weary, but wearing triumphant grins, lounged about the houses of Virgin Bay as Jeff and his little convoy came in. Comanche Carruthers got up from a veranda and lounged over. He looked at Jeff; looked up at the girl; looked at Jeff again—and grinned dryly:

"Well, we sho' smacked 'em proper! Guardiola had better than six hundred o' the best Legitimist troops, too. We downed a whole passel of 'em—sixty splattered around the jungle outside the palisade, alone! Oh, Uncle Billy, he wants to augur with you a spell. Think he wants to fuss at you. . . ."

"Fuss at me?" Jeff frowned. "About what?"

"About bein' so rough on them Legitimists."

They found Walker on the veranda of Cushing's house, with the grizzled Hornsby, the big daredevil, Cal O'Neal, the little boyish lieutenant, Gay, and old Chélon-of-the-Stiff-Knee. It looked like a council of war.

Walker looked at the trio for an instant, then his rare smile flashed briefly. He came over, with his hand outstretched. He was only less tattered than Jeff.

"I thank you for the sort of fighting you did! 'The Tall Texan. . . .' You are well-named. Though — doubtless — some of Guardiola's men would find other and various names for you, in the romantic Spanish fashion. Who are these?"

JEFF introduced the old printer and Nora. Walker nodded. He stared for a moment out over the village street. His round, steely eyes widened. Those on the veranda were sure that he stared at something beyond what they could see; at some scene of the future, conjured up by his brain.

"A printer," he said slowly. "Mr. Majors, why go on to California to seek your fortune? Why not stay here with us? It is a gamble, of course. But if you were not a chance-taker, certainly you would not be making this long and wearisome journey to San Francisco, at your age. So—stop here! Take this gamble! American influence in Nicaragua is but beginning. I will be Army chief of the Democrats after today. Very quickly that will mean Army chief of Nicaragua, for the Legitimist Party cannot stand before such fighters as those Falanginos. And more of the breed are coming.

"Now, I'm going to establish an English-Spanish newspaper — a government organ, to be called *El Nicaraguense,* The Nicaraguan. Will you stay here, Mr. Majors, to help me in that enterprise? We have a couple of printers among us. You will receive grants of land and payment in our Nicaragua scrip. Liberal payment!"

"That will please me," Majors nodded quickly. "I'm not wanting any more journeying by sea."

"Good. We leave for San Juan very quickly. You will go with the column. Arrange for their transportation, Hornsby —for their comfort while we are here."

He drew Jeff aside and looked at him steadily:

"Is this man Eggitts the one whom you follow?"

"I just do' no'," Jeff confessed, with frown and shrug.

Briefly, then, he told Walker what the dying Crowfoot had said—and what Nora Majors had told him of the plot she had overheard without knowing it to be a plot. Walker nodded absently, fingering the bullet-torn packet of letters in the pocket of his linen duster.

"That description of Miss Majors' fits most neatly a very thorough scoundrel who calls himself 'Judge Drake.'"

"Judge Drake!" Jeff snapped. It had come to him that Cushing had remarked upon Drake's inspection of the passenger-list, just before he had come on the same errand.

"Yes. Do you know him? He came from San Francisco a month ago, and since then has been trying to persuade me to enter into a partnership with him. To make myself the dictator of Nicaragua, then grant to him all concessions.

"I finally discovered his real purpose and ordered him out of San Juan yesterday. He has gone to Rivas, to try to persuade General Corral—the real leader of the Legitimist Party, now—to enter an arrangement of that sort with him. He has a rascally young Nicaraguan with him—one Pico Gomez. They are well matched."

He looked at Jeff.

"Who is the man for whom you looked in New Orleans?" he asked softly. "Is it —by any chance—Matthew Stance?"

"MATTHEW STANCE!" Jeff nodded fiercely — but somewhat taken aback by this guess of the steely-eyed little man.

"I—have reason to believe that 'Judge Drake' and Matthew Stance are one and the same. I have my own methods of gathering information. So I believe that Stance came through Nicaragua and continued to California. There he found competition stiff. He remembered Nicaragua. So, he returned—but with beard and mustache shaven. With the new name —Drake. From what Miss Majors has said, I think that he has also used the name

Eggitts, since the little assassin you killed had known him as that."

"I do'no' how to thank you!" Jeff said earnestly. "He an' my father was partners in a hunt for some cached Spanish gold. When they'd found it, Stance murdered my father from behind an' run off with all the gold. That left me owin' fifteen thousands my father had borrowed from good friends to pay for this treasure-hunt an' some things. I want to find Stance—that's the only way I can see to ever pay the debt. An' the Forbys—anybody in Texas'll tell you—are hell on payin' their debts!"

"I can easily believe that!" Walker nodded, with quick, appreciative glance at this member of the clan. "Now—what will you do? I should like to have you join me."

"Do'no' anything I'd like better," Jeff shrugged, "but I have got this business to settle. After that—well, either I won't be worryin' about fightin' or I'll be free to take a whirl with you. I like your style."

"It is certain death—or virtually that—to go to Rivas, with Drake hand-in-glove with Corral," said Walker, seeming to read Jeff's thought.

"Corral is the most consummate schemer in Central America. But for my arrival last June, he would now rule Nicaragua—and cruelly! Drake is the very man to impress Corral; to show him how to use power even more profitably than Corral had thought to do. So—if you go to Rivas—"

"That's a mighty good piece o' advice. But—good advice just goes in one ear an' out t' other, with me. My father used to say 't was because there was no brain between to stop it. Anyhow, I'll be headin' for Rivas with my hair in a braid, right sudden. If I don't come back—"

"Luck to you!" Walker smiled. "I can understand your feeling and I can't find it in me to blame you. If you come back, come to me. I'll put you to work that The Tall Texan is eminently suited for."

SO, within the hour, Jeff was on the road to Rivas—a hard-beaten trail that led, first along the beach of Lake Nicaragua, then cut into the dusty, thorny scrub beside it. The blunt cone of Ometepec volcano rose from the water of the lake ahead, to eastward. Jeff rode a stocky native horse and wore the cotton clothing and the leather chaparejos of the middle-class native.

But slung in their holsters under his jacket were his .47 Colts and before he had gone five miles, he had reason to be thankful that he had not put them with his other possessions in the saddle-bags.

A half-dozen tatterdemalions leaped from a thicket. One, by virture of more villainous face than the others, the chief of them, demanded Jeff's business and his destination. In Spanish as fluent as the man's own, Jeff spun an artful yarn of diplomatic messages, going from the Legitimists' president, Estrada, at Granada, to General Corral.

"In that case," grinned the ragamuffin, "it will be a favor to you, if we relieve you of the things that would burden you down. A messenger should strip himself of weight. Those saddlebags now—the horse! We will care for them!"

One of the gang had come through the scrub, up behind Jeff, silently as any snake. He jumped upon the horse, now. His thick arms shot around Jeff's waist from the rear. The others surged forward, hands on knives, grinning fiercely. Jeff understood, then, that these were masterless men—deserters, probably, from the force of Corral and Guardiola. A slit throat would be his lot, if he could not break free.

So he kicked his scrubby mount violently. It plunged and for a moment the outlaws fell back. But behind him, the big fellow of the crushing arms clung tightly. Jeff hooked a fist over-shoulder into the unseen face. The anaconda-grip loosened for long enough to let him snatch out a Colt. He jammed the muzzle against the body that hugged his; fired. With the muffled roar, the man screamed and slipped sideway off the horse. A musket bellowed.

The slug tore the brim from Jeff's straw hat. He let go his reins and with Colt in each hand, charged the group, shooting with cold ferocity into the thick of them. They dropped or plunged into the jungle. But there was a thutter of hoofs, uptrail. Men came riding at him.

"Like a bunch o' buzzards smellin' a dead cow," Jeff said to himself. *"Adiós,* people. I'm leavin' you flat—an' fast!"

## V

NOTHING but his skill as plainsman —and as bearer of the Colts—saved Jeff from capture that would have meant death, in the next three days. Clear to the coast he must dodge, eating snatched-up meals from native huts.

The country between Virgin Bay and Rivas was alive with scattered bands of deserters and of hunters for those deserters. Time after time he hugged the shelter of a thicket in the scrub-jungle, and watched men go by afoot or on horse, or mule-back.

"*Dios mio!*" he told himself wonderingly, near dusk of the third day. "I have traveled two hundred miles, I bet, to try an' make fifteen-sixteen. This poor nag's feet are worn off to the hocks, a'most. But I'll make Rivas tonight or bust a hamstring. An' after I do slip in—Well, Matt Stance, we'll see what we'll see. An' how you like what you'll see—the muzzle o' my Colt."

He had tortillas and a gourd of black beans. Squatting on the ground in a clump of thorny brush beside his worn horse, he ate his supper. Then he swung up on the flat saddle of untanned cowhide. He looked to the hang of the Colts and moved cautiously forward.

He knew the trail to Rivas. A peon had showed him that afternoon, and then set a baker's dozen of hooknosed thieves on his track. He came into it and jogged softly to the northward. Presently—within two miles—he saw topaz-yellow lights low against the horizon ahead. His face hardened under the stubble of beard. His eyes glittered and he leaned tensely forward with big hand curving mechanically around the bone handle of a Colt.

"Rivas!" he whispered. "A long way from Texas, Matt. A long way, but you killed a Forby, fella."

He came up to the shabby outskirts of this important southern stronghold, which Corral and Guardiola held with several hundreds of the best soldiers the Legitimist Party could muster. He hesitated. There were watch-fires burning all along this side of the town. He could see moving figures in their light. Evidently, the sentries.

He staked out his horse, having carefully resaddled it. Then he moved toward a point where two fires were farthest apart. The last fifty yards he made like a Comanche—flat on his belly, wriggling over the ground. So he came to a barricade.

He crouched beside it, listening. He heard the pad of sandaled feet on the inner side of it. A sentry passing, perhaps. Cautiously, he raised himself and peered over. The coast was clear. He clambered upon the earthen bank that was its foundation, and wriggled over the pickets. He was inside. Inside Rivas!

HE went slouching along as if he were a wandering *soldado*. A woman crouched beside a fire, caught, perhaps, by the size and the swagger of him, called out affectionately. He answered her with an ancient and unprintable Spanish jest that came to tropical America with Cortez' troops.

A boy sauntering along a square away talked freely. General Corral was in his house, with his officers and the "new American general." Jeff lifted his brows at the title. From the youngster he drew easily the location of Corral's temporary headquarters. He lounged in that direction.

From a doorway across the dusty street, he watched grimly the yellow windows of the house. And out of the street-door, coming easily, halting a moment to stare up and down, moved a big man in dusky clothing. . . .

"Matt Stance!" whispered Jeff unbelievingly, to himself. He waited breathlessly, fearful that his enemy would go back inside or be joined by others.

His hands were hard-gripped on the Colt-butts. In him rose a cold fury that set him shaking. For Red Roy Forby had been a Man, as well as his father; one of the hard-hitting, straight-eyed, pioneer type. But if he had had a smashing fist for his enemies, the man he called "friend" could have the last thing he owned. It was not in him to be suspicious of a friend. It was on that trait that Matthew Stance had played, by which he had managed to murder the big Texan.

Stance went lounging off and Jeff crossed the dusky street like a stalking wolf. Two squares he followed his quarry, then closed in—slouching along like a peon who had no conceivable interest in such as the big American.

"Señor!" he whispered, coming up to

Stance's very elbow. "Oh, señor general. This is a pleasant meeting."

The big man whirled and his head came forward as he peered, trying to identify his accoster. As for Jeff Forby, he was caught by a crazy gale of laughter. He stood before the man he had trailed so long, shaking like an epileptic.

"Why—Why—Who are you?" cried Stance, in English. "What's the matter with you?"

"I—I'm just happy." Jeff gasped, when he could speak, using English this time. "Don't you know me, Stance? Oh, don't say that you haven't recognized me."

"I don't know what you mean! I am Judge Drake, of San Francisco—now, General Drake, of the Legitimist, the Nicaraguan Army. Who are you?"

"JEFFERSON FORBY!" Jeff snarled, all impulse toward laughing vanished as swiftly as it had come. "An' don't try to hoorah me with your slick tongue! You know dam' well who I am an' what I'm here for—to kill you deader'n Pontius Pilate! Got a gun?"

For answer, Stance whipped a pair of derringers from his side-pockets. But Jeff had been alert against this very maneuver. He had twin Colt-muzzles rammed into Stance's belly in a movement that was too blurredly swift for eye to follow. Stance let his derringers drop to the dust.

"Now, we're goin' to have a duel!" Jeff told him grimly. "Got another gun—" he patted Stance's hips "—have you? Uh-huh! Thought you would have. Take it out—careful. We'll stand back to back in the street, step off at my word, whirl at five paces an'—pop your whip, fella! But don't try turnin' before-hand or scroogin' on your steps. I'll be watchin' you."

"You're crazy, man," protested Stance. His deep voice quivered. "I tell you, I don't know what this mad business means! I'm Judge Drake, of California! I never was in Texas in my life—"

"I never told you I was from Texas." Jeff caught him swiftly. "If you wasn't Matthew Stance, you wouldn't know where I was from, nor what part Texas played in this. Get goin', or I'll kill you where you stand!"

Back-to-back, they stood. Jeff snapped his order. So they moved off, each with a pistol in his hand. But there was a scuffing sound behind Jeff before he had taken two paces. He whirled, but Stance was before him in turning. His pistol's orange flaming stabbed the thickening darkness. Jeff felt a burning pain in his neck. Then he was firing at Stance. It happened too swiftly for anything but haziest subconscious thought.

He knew that he was standing there, expecting to feel other leaden slugs tear into him. But he fired as rapidly as he could work his Colt. Dimly, too, he knew that Stance had crashed down. He stood, swaying a little, staring down at that black blotch on the white dust of the Rivas-street.

Then he realized that the gun-fire had alarmed the town—which was a place of nerves on edge, these days. He saw soldiers coming, from both ends of the square. Some had torches. He whirled, looking for a way out. Then he shook his head. He could take no chances.

He streaked forward, to stoop over Matthew Stance. He shook the limp body; bent far over and peered at the heavy, clean-shaven face. Stance's head rolled; his eyes were half-open; his mouth, also, hung agape.

"Trail's end." Jeff gritted savagely and stood up.

NEARER the running soldiers came. Some in the van of the pack jerked up their muskets. A ragged, excited volley roared. Slugs kicked up dust-fountains in the street. Jeff leaped for the shadows of the house-walls. He had marked mechanically a passageway. Now, he darted into it. It was closed at the end of an elbow with a heavy wooden door.

A blind alley! No way out but through this door. Softly, he pounded on it. For what seemed ages, there was thick silence and he stood with Colt in each hand—but one empty—thinking that this was truly Trail's End—for him, also.

Then a muffled voice from inside asked who knocked. He answered easily—an officer. Already, the soldiers were at the other end of the passage; he could hear their feet. Only their lack of enthusiasm at rushing down a dusky tunnel gave him any time at all. He heard a bar lifting. He pushed and felt the door give. The

Stance's very elbow. "Oh, señor general. This is a pleasant meeting."

The big man whirled and his head came forward as he peered, trying to identify his accoster. As for Jeff Forby, he was caught by a crazy gale of laughter. He stood before the man he had trailed so long, shaking like an epileptic.

"Why—Why—Who are you?" cried Stance, in English. "What's the matter with you?"

"I—I'm just happy." Jeff gasped, when he could speak, using English this time. "Don't you know me, Stance? Oh, don't say that you haven't recognized me."

"I don't know what you mean! I am Judge Drake, of San Francisco—now, General Drake, of the Legitimist, the Nicaraguan Army. Who are you?"

"JEFFERSON FORBY!" Jeff snarled, all impulse toward laughing vanished as swiftly as it had come. "An' don't try to hoorah me with your slick tongue! You know dam' well who I am an' what I'm here for—to kill you deader'n Pontius Pilate! Got a gun?"

For answer, Stance whipped a pair of derringers from his side-pockets. But Jeff had been alert against this very maneuver. He had twin Colt-muzzles rammed into Stance's belly in a movement that was too blurredly swift for eye to follow. Stance let his derringers drop to the dust.

"Now, we're goin' to have a duel!" Jeff told him grimly. "Got another gun—" he patted Stance's hips "—have you? Uh-huh! Thought you would have. Take it out—careful. We'll stand back to back in the street, step off at my word, whirl at five paces an'—pop your whip, fella! But don't try turnin' before-hand or scroogin' on your steps. I'll be watchin' you."

"You're crazy, man," protested Stance. His deep voice quivered. "I tell you, I don't know what this mad business means! I'm Judge Drake, of California! I never was in Texas in my life—"

"I never told you I was from Texas." Jeff caught him swiftly. "If you wasn't Matthew Stance, you wouldn't know where I was from, nor what part Texas played in this. Get goin', or I'll kill you where you stand!"

Back-to-back, they stood. Jeff snapped his order. So they moved off, each with a pistol in his hand. But there was a scuffing sound behind Jeff before he had taken two paces. He whirled, but Stance was before him in turning. His pistol's orange flaming stabbed the thickening darkness. Jeff felt a burning pain in his neck. Then he was firing at Stance. It happened too swiftly for anything but haziest subconscious thought.

He knew that he was standing there, expecting to feel other leaden slugs tear into him. But he fired as rapidly as he could work his Colt. Dimly, too, he knew that Stance had crashed down. He stood, swaying a little, staring down at that black blotch on the white dust of the Rivas-street.

Then he realized that the gun-fire had alarmed the town—which was a place of nerves on edge, these days. He saw soldiers coming, from both ends of the square. Some had torches. He whirled, looking for a way out. Then he shook his head. He could take no chances.

He streaked forward, to stoop over Matthew Stance. He shook the limp body; bent far over and peered at the heavy, clean-shaven face. Stance's head rolled; his eyes were half-open; his mouth, also, hung agape.

"Trail's end." Jeff gritted savagely and stood up.

NEARER the running soldiers came. Some in the van of the pack jerked up their muskets. A ragged, excited volley roared. Slugs kicked up dust-fountains in the street. Jeff leaped for the shadows of the house-walls. He had marked mechanically a passageway. Now, he darted into it. It was closed at the end of an elbow with a heavy wooden door.

A blind alley! No way out but through this door. Softly, he pounded on it. For what seemed ages, there was thick silence and he stood with Colt in each hand—but one empty—thinking that this was truly Trail's End—for him, also.

Then a muffled voice from inside asked who knocked. He answered easily—an officer. Already, the soldiers were at the other end of the passage; he could hear their feet. Only their lack of enthusiasm at rushing down a dusky tunnel gave him any time at all. He heard a bar lifting. He pushed and felt the door give. The

was among the soldiers, flying up over the barrier, before they gathered their wits.

## VI

"RIGHT smart of a hawse," Jeff Forby told himself, as he lay flat on the Arab-Peruvian stallion and raced down a jungle-path. "Those hairpins behind are certainly due to stay behind, unless Niggah, here, falls down."

It was dawn and Rivas lay well behind him. Near daybreak, a detachment of Corral's cavalry had jumped him and the big animal lifted from the corral had proved his speed and bottom.

"I—wonder!" he told himself when pursuit was dead in his rear. "Her uncle's a Legitimist. But her father, she says, he was a Democrat an' so is she. Tell Walker to capture Granada, huh? I—wonder. . . ."

It occurred to him that the pretty Nicaraguan girl he had kissed so light-heartedly might possibly be cleverer than he had thought at the moment. True it was that she had shown him the way out. But—he had held her by the arm. Alone in the house, she had been helpless. She could have screamed, of course, but the Legitimists in the street would have been informed thereby of no more than they already knew—that he was inside.

"Suppose the's a nice gob o' Legitimists in Granada," Jeff put in to himself shrewdly. "Posted behind good barricades. Well, we come along to smack 'em an'—Bang!"

He pondered it and suddenly grinned as he remembered the pressure of the girl's lips on his, at farewell. Then he scowled and shook his head:

"She might've le' me kiss her, just as part o' the scheme! Hopin' that I'd think she was all for me an' go peddle her yarn to Walker. Well! I do'no'. I just do'no'. I'll tell Walker an' let him figure it all out."

A man materialized now, riding a cream-colored horse almost as tall as Jeff's stolen black. A well-dressed man, in clean brown linen. A man of pale, aristocratic features. Intellectual and—fanatical, Jeff saw, closer to the rider who approached him. He reined in and they stared, one at the other, very interestingly, with hands on weapons.

"Good morning," said the native. "Whence come you?"

"From Rivas," Jeff said solemnly in Spanish. "And you?"

"From—the north. Where had you that stallion?"

"I borowed it from—well, a councilor of General Corral; a man heart and soul and hand Legitimist!'

"Aguirre!" the native nodded. "But yes. In that case, *amigo mio,* I can talk freely to you, as one who is so much friend of Aguirre the patriot that he is loaned the stallion which, heretofore, none but Aguirre himself has ridden. What do you know of affairs in Granada?"

"Ah! Ah! Ah! Very sad," Jeff said with a sigh. "The soldiery hungry, unpaid, near-mutinous; sickness stalking the very heart of the capital of the party; Corral, best general, dallying in Rivas lest Walker capture the town—"

"Precisely! Corral must come—with all such friendly, hard-fighting foreigners like yourself as he can muster! He must come, or Granada falls and, with it, our party. I go now to Rivas with Estrada's letters—"

"Letters?" said Jeff and began to smile. "May I see them, to assure myself of these things? Ah, but I fear I must see them. I form my own opinions, always."

THERE was never a native who had a chance in gunplay with a Texas-raised man like Jeff Forby. Long experience with armed Mexicans had taught Jeff this. So he merely put a hand on Colt-butt as he laughed at the messenger and sent the stallion in a buck-jump alongside the big cream horse. Which was a mistake. . . .

The messenger seemed now to guess that he had misjudged the character of this big American. And his eyes blazed fiercely. Out of a sheath under his linen coat he whipped a knife and, as Jeff came abreast him, leaned a little sideway on his mount and struck.

The long, needle-pointed blade darted upward and bit into Jeff's breast. He half-heard, half-felt, the grate of the steel on his breastbone. Then the cream horse had shot past him and at a racing gallop was gone up the trail.

He whirled the black stallion mechanically and drummed with heels on its ribs. Then, he looked down. Blood was streaming down his front from beneath the knife, which was hidden to the haft-guard. He

caught it as the stallion pounded after the cream horse; tugged. It held. Harder he jerked and it came out. The point had been imbedded in a rib.

There was a rawhide rope on his saddle. He untied it and shook out a loop. The stallion was gaining a little on the messenger's horse. Jeff fingered Colt-butts, then shook his head. He could not find the heart to kill that splendid animal ahead, save as last resort.

The messenger turned and fired a half-dozen shots, but the bullets merely clipped twigs and leaves from the trees and bushes about Jeff. Grimly, he urged the stallion on, and began to whirl his loop. Within twenty feet he came and out shot the lariat. It settled over the messenger and Jeff hauled in his mount. The messenger came out of the saddle and crashed to the earth. He lay still.

Jeff bent over him. He was unhurt, except for the impact of the fall. And his letters were in a silk-wrapped packet in his breast. With these, Jeff swung onto his black again and went away—fast. He was not stopped again. Into the shabby, dreary little port of San Juan he jogged. But it was empty of the grim, swaggering Falanginos. Walker, a native shrugged, had returned to Virgin Bay. Only the little brig which was Walker's "navy," the old *Vesta*, swung around the hook in the roadstead, an anchor-watch aboard.

"A' right, Niggah," Jeff said to the stallion. "Virgin Bay for you an' me. Kind o' looks like excitement's due to pop. Rattle your hocks, boy. Rattle your hocks."

THE road to Virgin Bay was empty of life. Over it hung a quiet somehow sinister—as if this road, which had known much bloodshed, brooded now and waited for the next. But Jeff, relieved at last of his personal search for vengeance, was not easily impressed. Besides, he was riding fast.

Walker he found on the veranda of Cushing's house, his officers around him. Inscrutably, his round gray eyes went to Jeff's brown face. Once, he glanced at the stallion.

"I'm glad you got out of Rivas," he said briefly.

"Thanks. I heard somethin' there that sounded interestin', but couldn't be proved. Then I met a fella from Granada—an' proved the first tale."

Walker listened and Hornsby, O'Neal, Gay, Doubleday and the others on the veranda crowded in, tense-faced. The letters, when opened and translated by Jeff Forby, merely verified Jeff's own quickly-told story.

"I'll send these to Corral," Walker decided, with jerk of the head toward the packet. "As affairs are now, we hold Realejo—the northern Pacific seaport—with San Juan down here. We have, also, Chinandega and Leon in the north. Now—we will take Granada! Nothing will so impress the natives as our possession of our enemies' capital. Nothing will so quickly cause the commoners to desert Corral and Estrada. So—aboard the lake-steamer, *La Virgen*. Say nothing to the men, you officers. We will have Granada quickly and silently."

When, at dusk, *La Falange Americana* and Chélon Valle's natives slipped aboard *La Virgen*, the men were quiet, in obedience to Walker's orders. Jeff Forby stood at the steamer-rail, looking out over the dark water. And a light hand was laid upon his arm. He turned, smiling, to face Nora Majors.

"It's Granada?" she asked him. "My father has been at work, studying the country and the situation. He said that as an old soldier of 1812, he knew what Walker's move must be. He is ten years younger, I do believe, nowadays."

"Yaaaaiiiiaaaah! Granada! Walker! Granada!" a sudden bellow came that fairly shook the flimsy steamer. For with turning of the vessel's prow, La Falange had suddenly guessed their destination.

"Yes. Granada. I'm glad that your father's enjoyin' life. He'll see all the fightin' he craves, I reckon, before we shove Walker high, down here."

"You—You've joined Walker? You—settled your personal affair? We heard that you had gone to Rivas. . . ."

"All wiped up," Jeff said, half-absently. He could see her face but dimly in the faint light from a standing-lantern. But she was most stunningly pretty—and grown up overnight.

"Oh!" she said abruptly. "You—made a conquest, I see!"

JEFF looked down, without understanding. Then he saw the little knot of crimson silk which, without his knowledge, the girl in Rivas had pinned to his shirt and which he had let remain. He tried to tell her about the girl, but she stared out over the water and seemed not to hear.

When he had finished, she nodded indifferently and spoke of that big, handsome redshirt, Cal O'Neal. Jeff gathered that she had seen much of Cal lately—and seen much to admire, in him. He moved his shoulders impatiently. And Cal came to take her away.

Jeff was somewhat sullen of face, until the steamer dropped anchor near three of the morning, close inshore. Then he forgot such things as pretty faces. Between steamer and jungle-walled shore the whaleboats moved steadily. By four, Walker's column was formed. To southward it moved, with Hornsby and Walker at its head. On right and left, natives advanced under Chélon and his officers.

As the sky flushed with the dawn, they were upon the broad, white road that led to the capital. It was all amazingly lovely and peaceful; a tiny morning breeze bore the fragrance of flowers and the odor of clean dust. Market-carts were moving toward town. These were halted; the column passed them.

They turned a bend in the road—and there was a high barricade. Tawny faces lifted above it. Walker's arm jerked up in his awkward, characteristic gesture. The charge!

"Yaaaiiiaah! Yaaaiiiaah! Remember Rivas!" yelled the Falanginos, leaping forward like eager hounds. "Giv'm' hell!"

There was a line of fire running along the barricade. Bullets thudded into the dust of the road. Then the Falanginos hurled a stinging blast of lead that wiped the barrier-top clean of faces as a sponge erases a chalked line. Up scrambled the Falanginos, to fall upon the shattered remnant of this outpost with Colt and bowie. On they surged, then, tagging the flying remainder of the Legitimists.

Another barricade—and this more grimly held. The Falanginos spread out in a deadly fan-movement and took it by front and flanks; enveloped it; swallowed the garrison of it except for a dozen fugitives. Triumphantly, they shrilled the weird, hair-crinkling battle-yell which, already, had come to mean in natives' ears the siknal for superhuman battling.

But behind the third and final barrier, muskets crashed defiantly. This time the Falanginos sprinted at it in column and under its very crest whirled to right and left. Using each others' backs and shoulders for scaling-ladders, so they went over the top and fought like wild men in the very middle of the Legitimist soldiers. And suddenly, there was no hostile face, no weapon, between them and the lake-shore side of Granada.

WALKER sat down in the abandoned *palacio* of the Legitimist president, Estrada. Grinning Falanginos swaggered up and down the streets. Old Chélon counted noses and came to Walker to report in his booming voice that the Democratic loss tallied one native drummer boy! There was not a Legitimist soldier alive, in all Granada.

"Corral must yield, now!" he grinned wolfishly. "For we hold the very heart of the Legitimist party. *Sí!* To the native, the city is the party. Granada lost to Corral and Estrada, lost is the Legitimist cause. Precisely as the Democratic cause would be lost, if we should lose Leon."

Walker nodded. He had a rude map of the country laid out before him. The town of Masaya—"granary of Nicaragua"—he jabbed with forefinger. For there lay Corral, a spy had just reported; Corral, who had rushed from Rivas to take command in the north. And in Masaya, behind strong barricades, Corral had men enough to eat alive the Democratic party. Unless—

"Unless *La Falange Americana* should prove too tough a bite," he smiled flashingly at his officers.

He dictated a letter to Corral, skillfully worded, to hint that many more Americans were hurrying to Nicaragua to join La Falange. He ended by inviting Corral to come to Granada and join him in establishing a provisional government which should be, not Legitimist, not Democratic, but all-Nicaraguan; to be formed from both elements.

"A long step forward," he told the redshirts. "This is a day which may well be forever printed in red upon the Nicaraguan calendar. For none can say what

this country may become, with American ideas, American blood, fused in it. So—whatever Corral decides, we go on from here. You men may rest assured of one thing. The fighting qualities of Americans will never be forgotten in Nicaragua!"

## VII

A PISTOL-SHOT shattering the silence of dusk jerked Jeff Forby's head about—and he saw the slinking figure that kept close to the shadows. The shot had been fired by a Falangino, a big sentry who chased a native prisoner through Granada's streets. Jeff noted this mechanically. He saw the prisoner halt with the thud of a bullet at his feet, and watched the Falangino haul him away.

But the furtive man who edged along house-fronts was much more interesting than the other pair. Corral was in Granada, now. He had come in to make a treaty with the Democrats. A new government had been formed, with one Patricio Rivas for provisional president and for Minister of War—Corral himself! Walker was now Army-chief.

But there was an undercurrent in this city which none of the Americans liked. Granada was still "Heart of the Legitimist Party." The white ribbon and the red might be discarded by Legitimist and Democrat; both parties might pin on the blue ribbon of the fusion. But Walker fancied that Corral was not beaten, yet. Corral was a Legitimist, a haughty aristocrat, to his fingertips. So—the Americans were watchful.

"What's that hairpin snoopin' about?" Jeff asked himself frowningly. "Now that the new government's workin', you would think that nobody would have to slide through the shadow like that fella's doin'."

As he wondered, he followed the man. No shadow could have drifted more silently than Jeff went, through the dark streets, past rows and rows of low, white-plastered houses. He followed to a corner and around it; went after him down a noisome alley; watched him slide into a back-yard.

*"Por Dios! Por Dios!"* Jeff grunted suddenly. "This is Corral's house. Now—what's *that* big yellow boy up to?"

He went into the yard, crouching like some great cat. The man he trailed was knocking at a door, rapping softly, with a sort of code, Jeff thought. The door opened. In it was framed the big, portly, arrogant figure of Corral himself, in green major-general's uniform.

"Ha!" he said, by his tone both surprised and pleased. "I had thought you in the north—where this accursed movement of the Democrats has not gained head as yet. What have you to tell me? Why have you ventured into Granada?"

"It seemed safe enough," the man shrugged. "According to this treaty you signed the other day, neither Legitimist nor Democrat is to be molested for his past activities. But I could not believe that you really meant to join hands with dogs of Democrats, or forget the sacred Legitimist cause."

"You would be right in cursing me, if I did!" Coral snarled venomously. "No! I am playing with them. They had grown too strong to fight openly. This little gray-eyed devil, the American Walker, with his tall madmen, the Falanginos—they made Castellon and the Democrats unbeatable. So I put my brain to work. The result—I am the chief military figure of Nicaragua—the Minister of War. I control the army. I put my dog in to hold my chair—Patricio Rivas."

"AH-H!" the man said. Jeff was flattened, now, against the wall within ten feet of where they stood. "Trust Corral! Have you work for me to do? You know that you can trust me."

"There is no truer Legitimist living than Gil Gonzales," Corral admitted. "Yes. You came as in aswer to my call. Take a packet of letters I will get for you. Take them to my men at Rivas, at Managua. To Guardiola, the Butcher, who has gone to Honduras. This battle, my good Gonzales, is between Walker and me. I must have more men than he can muster; enough to swallow those terrible redshirts of his. If Guardiola wil raise an army—

"Tell him what I write. Make him understand that he must bring his army to Nicaragua and offer it to President Rivas. Then, I will post such strong garrisons in each town that never again can this Democratic deviltry gain head. I will get you these letters. Take them and ride

as if the devil pursued you—a little, pale-faced, gray-eyed devil who rode at the head of a hundred redshirted other devils."

He disappeared from the doorway for a moment; returned and handed Gonzales a packet. The messenger nodded and put the letters in his breast. He was gone through the yard then without more talk. Corral closed the door, and Jeff rushed after Gonzales.

He had to get those letters. Corral was a perjured traitor. The fate of every American in Nicaragua hung on that thin packet in Gonzales' breast. Let Corral's messages go out and it would be next to impossible to prove that he had sent them—until too late. The Democrats could hardly muster—scattered as they were, now—in time to check the swarming Legitimists, who doubtless were all ready for this blow under the belt.

He raced down the alley and to the corner. No sign of Gonzales. The man must have run! He looked up and down the next street and saw a hurrying figure. After it he went, and with the light padding of his feet Gonzales whirled, then ran on, faster than before. Jeff was forced to extend his long legs to the utmost, and even then he feared to lose the letter-bearer. He jerked a Colt and cried out. Gonbales halted and Jeff ran up to him.

"Once again we meet!" he cried to Gonzales. "And once more I must ask you—may I have those letters? But no knife-play this time! But for a thick rib, you would have killed me that day on the jungle-trail."

"It is my everlasting regret that I did not," Gonzales assured him grimly. "I—"

THEN suddenly he whistled shrilly and at the same time flung himself flat on the ground. Men materialized out of the shadows like ants swarming. They rushed Jeff Forby, and he saw the dull glint of knife-blades. He pivoted on a heel and emptied his Colt. But these were grimly determined ones! Three, at least, would "never smile again." But they closed in and gave Jeff no time to jerk his other Colt.

Gonzales, who still was prone, caught Jeff's ankles and tugged desperately. Jeff tried to free his feet, the while he laid around him furiously with Colt-barrel. Men tried to go behind him, and he ducked and twisted and lashed out with the pistol. Time and again he felt it crunch on bone; time and again darting knife-points nipped him, but, somehow, he fought on like a wounded grizzly without receiving a serious wound.

Then he stumbled and fell across Gonzales. The remnant of the little band of Legitimists sprang in to finish him. He caught Gonzales and rolled over, putting the native on top. He felt the straining body sag abruptly, and in that moment heard the pound of running feet.

"The watch!" someone yelled, just above him. "Run!"

The Falanginos of the guard found Jeff struggling from under the limp weight of Gonzales and tugging the packet of letters from the dead man's shirt. Big, swaggering Cal O'Neal was the officer of the guard.

"Sure an' 't was a lovely brawl someone had!" he cried. "Six down besides this one ye were huggin' when we come up!"

"They knifed him by mistake," Jeff panted. "A lovely brawl, yeh. An' there'll be more scrappin' before we're done!"

He took the letters to Walker's quarters and sat while they were translated. Then the grim, little, gray-eyed man began to move his forces like a chess-player laying out his pieces. The city was tightly guarded to prevent anyone slipping out. Every place of importance was held by picked men set there swiftly and quietly.

EARLY the next morning President Rivas and his cabinet were called by Walker to a council, and Corral, swaggering in a big, arrogant figure, wilted with sight of the letters. Walker flung his charges as, in other days, he had addressed juries. Corral lied; stumbled and contradicted himself; finally admitted desperately that the letters were his.

"I would have toppled this toy government in a month!" he cried furiously. "With the help of Guardiola, of the American Stance—who never came into this so-called coalition—"

*"Stance!"* a terrible voice interrupted him. Even though he stood in the shadow of death and knew it, Corral gaped at the grim-faced, blazing-eyed redshirt who had

crossed the room flashingly to stand glaring at him. "You said—*Stance!*"

"Drake, then," Corral shrugged wondering. "He has used both names, in Nicaragua. I made him a general, at Rivas. Then someone shot him before he could aid me in battle. Not serious wounds, but painful—a glancing bullet on the head, a wound in the shoulder—"

"Let that go now, Forby!" Walker told Jeff. "You will have your chance at Stance again. Now—Coral goes to trial."

To Jeff, wondering grimly about Granada and buttonholing all who might know Stance's whereabouts, the trial of Corral, the rattle of the muskets of the firing-squad, had no interest. Somehow, he was more moved now by furious hatred than he had been before that night in Rivas. The days of believing that he had killed his father's murderer had been a time of such relaxation that Corral's words had had the more effect upon him.

But prowl as he might about Granada; ride as he might from one to another of the towns—Chinandega, Realejo, Leon, Masaya, Managua, south to Rivas again he could find no trace of Matthew Stance. He went back and forth and finally, when Corral's execution was becoming but a memory, he came back to Granada and slipped wearily down off Niggah, the big stallion, before Walker's headquarters.

"I'm licked—so far," he told the little man. "The devil's certainly takin' care o' his own. You might think the ground had opened up an' swallowed him—Stance. Picked up some news that'll interest you, General. There's talk that all the other countries are goin' to join the old Legitimists o' Nicaragua to chuck the 'American filibusters' out o' the country. You have been gettin' recruits, all right, but they're goin' to gang up on you."

"Mora, of Costa Rica, is now marching north with an army," Walker nodded. "I sent Colonel Schlessinger—a new officer—south to stop him. Schlessinger turned coward and ran away. His men were newcomers, too. No such iron as our old Fifty-Six Immortals. But we'll manage. Meanwhile—stay with us a while. You'll find Stance as quickly, with La Falange, as elsewhere. I have an idea that he may be with President Mora's advancing army. That would be a natural place."

JEFF nodded wearily and went out to join the redshirts. Old Comanche Carruthers greeted him with a wolf-howl and made a place for him in the ranks when they moved off to Rivas to gather together the remnants of Schlessinger's battalion. Going out upon the Rivas-road, Jeff turned where he marched beside Comanche. Nora Majors was standing in a doorway. She was pale, he thought. He wondered if she had been ill.

"Nah; it's her pa," Comanche told him. "He's been down with the *colerin*—the little cholera, you know. She's been nursin' him."

The girl met Jeff's grim, brooding eyes and a slow wave of color swept from neck to cheeks. Then she nodded to him, as to any casual acquaintance. Major Cal O'Neal, mounted on a big native gray, came galloping up along the column. He swept off his hat and the girl smiled upon him brilliantly. She seemed pulled to look again at Jeff, and her face was pinker still as one corner of his mouth lifted sardonically.

They reached Rivas, and from Leon—where President Patricio Rivas had moved his capital—came an urgent wail from that nervous executive. It was rumored that Guatemala, Salvador and Honduras had united to expel the Americans. The president feared that the Allied army was on the march. Back to Granada rushed Walker with La Falange. But there was no sign of hostile forces.

A courier came galloping into Granada as the sweaty Falanginos lounged in their old baracks. A bugle rang out; freckled Danny Donovan's drum sounded sinisterly in the swift silence that followed the bugle's blast.

"The Long Roll! The Long Roll!" the Falanginos yelled and leaped up to snatch their rifles. "Yaaaiiiaah! Yaaaiiaah! Give 'em hell! Where they at? We're goin' to quit tail-chasin' between Rivas an' Granada, now! Goin' to git a fight!"

They fell in and as the column reached the edge of the city, Jeff turned slowly, frowningly. It was quite within the possibilities that the united armies of the northern republic would take this time to strike at Walker. By fast marches, they could come down on Leon, Managua, Granada—the strongholds of Walker—and

wipe the country clean. This moment, when Mora and his Costa Ricans, plus the Nicaraguans who hated Walker, fought at Rivas, would be the logical moment for such a blow. And—Nora Majors was here in Granada. . . .

"Hell!" Jeff said to himself. "She wouldn't touch me with a ten-foot pole—an' all because o' the girl in Rivas. It's Cal O'Neal she is struck with. So Cal ought to be the one worryin' about her gettin' hurt."

But, all the same, a picture danced before his eyes—of a slender girl with face like carven ivory faintly flushed with pink; with scarlet mouth smiling—as once it had smiled on him in the jungle beyond Virgin Bay. And he scowled blackly at Cal O'Neal as that big Irishman rode ahead of him..

## VIII

NOBODY ever knew with certainty just how many men the savage Mora of Costa Rica had in Rivas. La Falange swelled, now, into lean battalions of Rifles and Infantry, with an excuse for both artillery and cavalry. No questions were asked.

In the ranks, there was perfect confidence that "Uncle Billy" knew what he was about; that whatever the odds were or the outcome of the attack might be, Mora would know that he had been in a fight. So they came up to Mora's barricades. . . . .

"The way they can put up barriers is just simply wonderful," Comanche grunted to Jeff. "Give 'em two cigarets an' a couple bricks an' a handful o' twigs an' I swear they can run up a breastwork in nine seconds. We're goin' to have trouble right—about here, Jeff."

"Can happen," Jeff nodded tightly. "They about ready? No use lookin' for a way around the ends o' the barricades. We got to smash through the front o' it."

"Stand by!" Cal O'Neal yelled. "Sure, an' ye'll be doin' some climbin' now, me lads. Just imagine that behind the barricades are kags an' kags o' *agua'rdiente,* with beautiful *señoritas* waitin' to serve ye-all. Who'll be first over? Any bets? I'll be crowdin' any o' ye to follow me."

The bugle rang out, the high, clear note ringing and reëchoing from house-walls The Falanginos' grip tightened on rifle-stocks. In the white dust of this street—and the others to right and left of it, for this was a general assault—they stooped a little forward. They were like eager hounds crouching, waiting for the leash to be slipped.

"Charge that barricade!" came the fierce order.

"Yaaaiiiaaah! Yaaaiiiaaah! Remember Rivas! Give 'em hell!" the ranks answered in one great voice that was fiercer still; a snarl, rather than a yell.

Forward they went. Jeff and the lean, hard-bitten Comanche raced toward the barrier together. It was to be pure brute force and savagery here; ancientest of fighting-methods—the hand-to-hand encounter of straining men.

A withering blast of fire ran fuse-like along the barricade's top from the sheltered Costa Ricans. Men in the street dropped, bullet-caught as they charged. Some lay still, uncouth huddles of red and black against the white dust; others crawled off to the side-lines to open up with rifles from the ground upon the Costa Ricans.

Jeff and Comanche and men to right and left of them gained the barricade. But so shattered had been the charge that not twenty here had reached the foot of the rudely-built breastwork. But these berserk redshirts, who felt that in Central America they were Destiny's tools, yelled the more savagely and sprang up to the top of the barrier.

Jeff lay flat upon it and shot his Colts empty, reholstered them swiftly and gathered in his Springfield again. All along the barricade-top to right and left of him the furious, uneven struggle went on. By sheer ferocity, the handful of redshirts counter-balanced odds of thirty, forty, fifty to one. They had no idea of what went on elsewhere in the battle. Each was shooting, stabbing, clubbing, at the Costa Ricans who strove—beaten forward by their officers—to get to them and drag them down.

ANOTHER charge swept up the street from Walker's main body. This time, since the desperate remnant of the first assaulters beat back the natives, the Falanginos gained the barricade almost untouched. They rolled over it and in the

street inside of it, fell upon the Costa Ricans.

Jeff dashed the sweat from his forehead and without taking time to reload, surged forward into the battle. He gave a burly native the butt in the face, stepped flashingly back and swung the rifle sideway like a club, to strike down a descending musket, brush it aside and kill the swinger.

The third man of the group he had attacked came in like a wild-eyed madman, whining horribly, his machete whistling in the air. Jeff dropped to his knees, under that terrific side-stroke. Up he came, inside the reach of it, with a bowie snatched from his belt. He drove the knife through the native's neck and jerked it free.

The machete lay on the ground and he scooped it up. No time for reloading now. It was roll those Costa Ricans back to the church—past it. The machete was an awful thing, in the hands of one as tall, as long-armed and powerfully muscled as The Tall Texan. Comanche Carruthers slid somehow in beside him. He, too, had picked up a machete to substitute for his empty Colts and rifle. Two others of the Falanginos followed the example of these.

Forward they went, a tiny phalanx that chopped itself a path into the thickest of the Costa Rican press. There was a stocky Costa Rican officer who from his post in the background screamed panther-like. He hurled his men forward to check the Americans; hurled them bodily. He looked drunk with battle. Jeff marked him and saw how he, alone, kept the enemy steady here.

"Let's get him!" he yelled at Comanche and the others. "Give 'em hell! Right straight through to him!"

The machetes swung and hacked. They beat down clubbed muskets; they forced themselves into the stubborn Costa Ricans by sheer cleavage. They were the favorites of the battlegods that day! Not a man of them had more than a scratch; blood-covered, naked to the waist, yelling hoarsely the battle-cry of La Falange, they chopped into the soldiery before them.

There was a swirl of figures and one of the half-seen turns of a fight that is wreathed by battle-smoke. Jeff shook his bare head to clear it. There before him was the Costa Rican officer. He lowered at the American for a flash, then sprang at him with a pistol in his hand. A musket from somewhere behind Jeff landed paralyzingly upon his right arm. The machete dropped and he was left with but one hand to face the Costa Rican.

HE jumped forward and they came together with a shock of iron-hard shoulders meeting. With the edge of his left palm, Jeff chopped downward upon the officer's pistol-arm. Then a thick arm was up, about his neck, bearing down remorselessly to snap the spine. He drove his fist into the Costa Rican's belly and stiffened his neck.

His right arm was not so numb. He caught the man with a waist-hold and they stood locked so, straining furiously.

It was the most powerful figure Jeff Forby had ever met. He even wondered if he had not come against a stronger man than himself. He could see the savage, triumphant snarl of the native. The fellow thought he had him. Jeff sagged, let himself go a little more limp, sagged still more . . .

*"Agghhh!"* the Costa Rican snarled, and moved his hands.

In that flashing split-second, Jeff sent into dynamic motion every ounce of his strength. He jerked both arms up, around the thick neck; hurled himself sideway and took the man with him.

They struck the ground and Jeff rolled over, shifting his grip until he was behind the Costa Rican. He hooked a leg around the fellow's thigh and stiffened his knee—rammed into the other's back. Back he strained, using left knee for fulcrum. There was a snap of breaking spine. . . .

The hurly-burly of the battle here—fiercest fight of the whole attack—had prevented notice by anyone of Jeff's private combat. The Costa Ricans were being pushed. At last—no longer stiffened by the officer Jeff had killed—they broke and ran for the shelter of houses far down the street. The Americans took position in houses, in a church-tower. They drew a long breath.

A little Irishman, ex-cavalry sergeant of the United States Army, grinned at Jeff.

"I lay yez a dollar ut's Lowery! I know'm by his big, Know-Nawthin' hat!

"Man, dear! But yer mug ut's a sight! Do we be gittin' a breather, thin? Nah!

Nah! Listen to 'em, would ye! Thim houses over the way, yander. We must be takin' 'em!"

Reinforced by other Falanginos, these who had taken that first barricade were hurled out and across the street, against a row of one-story houses in which the Costa Ricans had taken position and from which they kept up a torrid fire.

So the attackers were raked by bullets from within and a cross-fire from Mora's men down-street, sniping from roofs. They battered at doors and window-shutters with the butts of rifles; with logs torn from the barriers.

Each house was a separate battle. In the smoky, stinging darkness, the Americans hurled themselves at half-seen shapes. Orange flames stabbed the gloom. Knives licked up and men died without knowing who or what had struck them. But that line of houses was bloodily taken. Holes were knocked in the 'dobe walls, so that a sheltered way was had all along the street, here.

"REDSHIRTS!" Cal O'Neal's voice rang through the dusky room in which Jeff and others were taking station. "Here's Uncle Billy! He wants an off'cer an' some men!"

"No officers here," Jeff answered for the room.

"Forby?" Walker called. "You'll do. Act as lieutenant. Take a dozen men and see if you can plow through to that white house, yonder. At the rear of these. It's Mora's headquarters and he has a band of picked foreign sharpshooters. They're keeping us back on the left. Take volunteers."

"Redshirts!" Jeff yelled. "Who wants to go get killed? Who'll go with The Tall Texan after Mora?"

They answered him in one voice and when he counted noses at the rear door of this house, he had fourteen men. They crawled across the open space behind the house and were within fifty yards of Mora's quarters before the French and German sharpshooters on that roof discovered them. Then two men dropped. Jeff grinned fiercely at the survivors.

"Spread out an' salivate 'em!" he snapped. "They're no better shots than us! Give 'em hell!"

They opened up on the sharpshooters and for twenty minutes the battle raged. But the foreigners whom Mora had picked for their ability to shoot were no match for these men who had borne rifles since childhood. They doubled up on the defenders of that house; one fired, a second watched and drove accurate bullet at the flash of the return-fire. The French and Germans slackened their shooting, being not so eager to expose themselves. Jeff's party crept forward.

"All right!" Jeff snapped suddenly, from where he led the snake-like advance. "Up an' at 'em."

"Reckon we can gether 'em with a direct charge?" a gaunt Missouri backwoodsman asked calculatingly.

"Who'll come with me?" was Jeff's answer. "Who'll come with The Tall Texan into Mora's sittin' room? Remember Rivas! Give 'em hell!"

"Oh, I was jist a-wonderin'," the backwoodsman grunted calmly and was on his feet with the suddenness of a spring uncoiling. "Yaaaiiiaaah! Yaaaiiiaaah! Give 'em hell!"

THEY sprinted across the intervening open ground and the sharpshooters on the roof of Mora's quarters rushed to the edge to fire down at them. But they met such a withering blast of bullets from Jeff's party, which halted to drive lead upward at the distorted faces, that they reeled back.

"Yaaaiiiaaah! Give 'em hell!" Jeff roared and leaped toward the doors and windows of Mora's house.

There was a great block of mahogany lying near the front wall of this house; a roughly-squared block, tremendously heavy. Jeff glared fiercely about him, as the heavy doors and shutters withstood the pounding of his party's rifle-butts. He saw the mahogany chunk. It did not occur to him—battle-drunk as he was—that it was too heavy for one man to lift. He jumped to it.

"Out o' the way!" he panted, standing poised with the great block snatched up in his arms. "Here's a key!"

He hurled the block at the main door. From overhead, a few braver—or better-protected—sharpshooters fired down at the huddle of redshirts. There were but ten,

now, of the original fourteen. They gasped as the big block hurtled against the heavy door. Then, with a crashing of planks, the door was down. Men inside fired instantly. Jeff hurled himself in with six men at his heels.

In the gloom, the figures of the defenders were but dim shapes. The seven redshirts flung themselves, yelling hoarsely, at these, shooting, stabbing, clubbing.

Back from this hallway by sheer ferocity, so they drove the Costa Ricans. But there were many men in this house. Nor did they seem to care about shooting into their own ranks, so they shot at these raging Americans.

Jeff found himself surrounded. He lashed out with twin Colts and it seemed that at every impact, a man sagged to the tiles. And two more replaced that one. He fought on, his hands numbed so that he hardly knew that he still gripped the empty revolvers. The sweaty bodies pressed closer. Some were killed by questing bullets. But always they pressed in, closer and closer.

He had a stocky figure by the throat when from behind a blow came at his head. He felt the rush of the weapon and choked his man the harder. But something struck stunningly upon his hard skull. A sheet of flame seemed to spread out before him and explode. Then came utterest blackness.

## IX

"*POR amor de dios*" a voice cried marvelingly. "You say there were but a dozen of them? No more? To work —all this?"

"They are devils," another voice said irritably. "We slew all but these two. But one would think that they could not be killed. There are no braver soldiers in the world than these of Costa Rica's—of ours. They pressed in, out-numbering the Americans ten, fifteen, to one. They struck fiercely and yet, each time one of these redshirts, these devils, of Walker, fell, it was with wounds enough to kill a dozen men. They fell, each alone, in a little circle of our soldiers he had killed. Never were there men like these!"

The talk seemed very far away. Jeff heard and understood the Spanish, but it came between pulsing aches that seemed to swell and contract his skull. He opened his eyes and saw through a haze at first. But presently he saw more clearly, a paunchy, lemon-yellow man of fat, fierce face and heavy black mustaches, wearing wrinkled linen suit. Beside this one stood a scarred, chocolate-brown man in gold-sashed blue uniform.

"What is your excellency's thought concerning them?" the uniformed one demanded respectfully.

"We will have a fiesta!" the civilian grinned tigerishly. "Yes! Now that the battle has slackened, we can muster most of our men, to witness the fate Mora of Costa Rica decrees for all these *filibusteros!* Kick them to consciousness, Ojeda. Then have them brought out to the little plaza and we will shoot them there. Thus my soldiers can gather and see."

The officer—Ojeda—nodded and began to kick viciously at something beyond the range of Jeff's clearing vision. So he rolled over and sat up. His arms were bound tightly to his sides. His ankles, also, were lashed together. Nearby him, on the floor of an ordinary dwelling-house room, lay Comanche Carruthers, similarly trussed up.

Comanche, like Jeff, was a borderman. There were many among the Falanginos who spoke Spanish understandable only when their gestures were plain. But when either of this pair spoke the tongue, none failed to understand.

So it was, now! Sitting up, his lean, bitter-lined face a blood-caked mask, Comanche traced for Ojeda—and for Mora "the Yellow Hog" the pedigree of their sort. It was complete in every detail and included—among very many other elements —monkeys, burros, Spanish deserters, alley-curs, buzzards and lost women.

Jeff applauded with enthusiastic yells, forgetting his aching head. Ojeda and Mora howled for the guard. They were purple of face before the soldiers ran in to roughly gag the two prisoners.

"Strip them. Give them but a loincloth!" Mora bellowed. "Cut their feet free and bring them to the wall in the little plaza!"

SO, naked but for cotton breech-clouts, Jeff and Comanche were hustled out of the house and into the street. It was nearly twilight. Rifle-fire sounded desul-

torily from the center of the town, where the lines of the two sides contacted. Here, around the new headquarters of Mora, soldiers seemed to have nothing to do but lounge and lean on their arms. They gaped curiously at the two brawny prisoners.

A portly figure dressed, like Mora, in soiled linen, came out of a group of soldiers. He had a scabbardless sword in his hand and a pair of Colts — taken, Jeff thought, from some dead Falangino — sagged at his waist. He bent forward to stare and at sight of Jeff stiffened with a strange strangling sound in his throat.

"Forby!" he said—then began to laugh.

Jeff broke loose from his guard; hurled himself forward with a furious oath at Matthew Stance. He butted him in the face with the top of a very hard head; carried him to the ground and worried at the plumb that with his teeth, trying to reach the jugular. But the soldiers flung themselves on him, hammering at him with musket-butts. They dragged him off before he had bardly torn Stance's throat and held him erect, bleeding from new wounds, self-senseless from the hammering.

"You'll get yours, now." Stance yammered at him. "Your excellency. Let me have the work of killing him! He is the man who shot me, here in Rivas, when I was with Corral."

"Peace!" Mora grinned at him. "He is a symbol. He is not for private vengeances. He is the symbol of the fate of all these accursed *diablos americanos*. He must die by a bullet of Costa Rica; a bullet of mine—as much the smiting fist of Mora as if I, personally, fired the shot! To the plaza!"

Stance stepped forward with almost insane snarl. He struck out with the flat of his sword, straight across Jeff Forby's face. The soldiers held Jeff by sheer weight. But Comanche's guards were not so vigilant. So the big red-shirt sprang at Stance and again the murderer went down; would have died with Comanche's teeth in his throat, but for the soldiery.

They were hurried on and the guard halted them before a white-plastered wall. Soldiers began to crowd into the little plaza, gaping, grinning, at this spectacle. Mora made a speech, elaborating on the symbolism of this execution. It was but the straw that told, he said. Soon, the valiant forces of Costa Rica would stand, one great firing-squad, before all the dogs of usurping American filibusters, who would cringe as these two cringed, bound and waiting death.

"Walker, too" he cried. "He plans now —I know everything. I am Mora! He but uses Patricio Rivas for figurehead. It is his determination that this election shall see Willian Walker, Chief of the Army, become President William Walker of Nicaragua. That plan might well have succeeded, but for me—Mora! But when my sword—the sword of Mora—is unsheathed, these *filibustero* dogs tremble. I—"

A STOCKY man on a sweat-lathered horse plunged through the soldiers. His mount sagged with feet outspread, sides heaving convulsively, then dropped flat with an almost-human groan.

"Your excellency!" gasped the rider. "Revolution is threatening in San José! You must return instantly to the capital, else all is lost. The forces of revolt are mustering. I have killed four horses between this and San José."

Mora's yellow face was distorted. His lips moved but no words, merely choking noises, came forth. He gaped at the bearer of tidings. Then, suddenly, he was galvanized into activity. He shouted commands. Lancers for escort. Horses. All to be ready instantly.

The firing-squad began to move forward. They came up with rattle of accoutrements, barefooted little men of fierce brown faces, split by the flash of white teeth. Jeff and Comanche glanced at them, then at one another; shrugged and grinned tightly.

"It's so long!" Jeff grunted in a steady voice. "Wish I could have taken that sneakin' murderer along, though!"

"Walker'll make 'em pour out buckets o' blood," Comanche said. "Well, they're ready to fire. So long, Jeff!"

The muskets came up at the order of Mora himself. Jeff looked over their heads at the darkening sky. And suddenly in his mind a picture came. Well—she was struck with Cal O'Neal, anyway. But she certainly was a lovely girl. Had things been different . . .

"Fire—Stop!" Mora cried in a breath. He waved his arms.

Two of the soldiers could not check their fingers. But their aim was disturbed by the contradictory cries. The bullets *plupped* into the wall at the right of the two condemned.

"Stop! Stop!" Mora bellowed. "I have a better thought! I will take these *filibusteros* with me. This gathering of the disaffected I will put down swiftly, with a hard, bloody hand. Then I will have these dogs, here, shot in the plaza at San José. Have them ready to accompany us, Ojeda. I leave in an hour—as soon as I have eaten. Horses for them!"

So Jeff and Comanche stared incredulously at each other. Their lips moved without sound. But the same thought was in each mind; crystal-clear to each. If two frontiersmen such as they could be taken all the way to San José—

A GRINNING little lieutenant of lancers was in charge of them, while they waited for Mora to finish his supper and his final conference with his officers. He was not a bad sort, this *teniente*. He brought them food and they ate, their hands free, under the cocked muskets of a half-dozen lancers of the President's Guard. Then they were rebound.

Two lancers stood guard over them, in a room near the back of the house. There was a long passage-way outside, leading to the patio where Mora's horses waited.

Comanche asked a lancer for a *cigarro* —and received an oath. Jeff, sitting up with back to wall, hands in his lap, suddenly jerked up his head and stared past the lancers. Mechanically, they turned. And he twitched his hands . . . freed them . . .

He came to his feet in a cat-spring, crossed the six feet of space between him and the lancers, seized them by the necks and cracked their heads together. Comanche was no more than a split-second behind him. He fell awkwardly upon one half-stunned man; bore him to the floor and kicked him with hard heel in the jaw, time and again.

There was hardly a sound to the whole mêlée, other than the panting and thudding of the combatants. For the lancers had been taken too wholly by surprise. Jeff snatched up a lance and jerked its edge across Comanche's bonds. They scooped up the muskets of the men and slid across They ran down it and looked out into the torch-lit patio. Men stood at horses' heads.

"Those two blacks," Jeff whispered. Comanche nodded.

It was no more than ten feet from the door to the splendid animals held by soldiers. They rushed out. Jeff cracked one man with musket-barrel. Comanche, not so economical, fired point-blank at his man. Then they went into the saddles like cats. There was an opening in the patio wall and they hurled the horses at this.

By this time, the lancers had recovered their wits. There sounded behind the fugitives the roar of musketry and bullets hummed by. Jeff's horse collapsed in air, caught by a slug. Comanche's groan rose above all that noise. He turned back. But Jeff had come out of the saddle with a twist and was running back into the patio, straight at the milling Costa Ricans. There was a mounted man there. In a twinkling, his horse carried double, for Jeff went up behind him. The musket he had dropped. He buffeted the lancer furiously; toppled him from the saddle.

But the others were jumping to catch the bridle; to shoot this American devil down into the litter of the patio. He kicked with bare heels on the horse's sides and went after Comanche, lying flat on the animal's neck. Comanche whirled his mount and off they went, hell-for-leather, followed by wild bullets. Past knots of gaping soldiers. Jeff bellowed Mora's name and at their speed, in the thickening dark, the soldiers could not make them out.

They came to a final southward barricade and soldiers jumped up here. Again Jeff shouted Mora's name over and over. They went through a lane opened up by the soldiers. The barricade was shoulder-high and ragged-topped. A bonfire illumined it flickeringly. It was a bad jump to make, on horses they did not know. But it was neck-or-nothing!

"Up—an' over—or bust a ham-string." Jeff yelled enthusiastically. "Yaaaiiiaaah! Give 'em hell!"

Up the horses lifted. Jeff felt, rather than heard, his mount scrape a hoof. They came down; his horse stumbled for a heart-tightening flash, then recovered and they raced into the night. They struck the

the room to the passage. It was empty. Transit Road, near dawn, and drew rein. Comanche grinned haggardly:

"Well, sir . . . ." he drawled meditatively, "I have been in a tight or two. I've looked the devil right smack-deb into the whiskers, like you might say, before this. But, Jeff . . . I never pulled them whiskers like we done yesterday!"

## X

HE was an ancient of ancients, the man of the tiny hut near Virgin Bay. He squatted in the sunshine beside his door and blinked at the two fearsome, near-naked figures on horseback.

His bleary eyes showed no emotion, even when they slid from the native saddles and demanded of him food. He had nothing, he said. But Comanche pushed by him, into the single bare room. He whooped triumphantly and Jeff crowded past "El Viejo" to see what had been discovered.

It was a great gourdful of cold, black beans, a stack of foot-wide tortillas and a huge chunk of flinty yellow native cheese.

They fell upon the food with their hands for spoons, ignoring El Viejo as they ladled beans into their mouths or tore at the leathery corn-cakes. Then there sounded from the doorway a familiar click. They whirled. El Viejo had a long Colt's .47 in each hand. He had just flipped back the hammers. The revolvers roared together.

But these were man who hung by hair-triggers; accustomed to holding their lives as prize for flashing action. They had dropped like plummets to the earthern floor. Jeff—who had been battering the cheese upon the wooden bench to break off a granite-hard bit—went down with the great chunk still in his fist. He rolled a little and hurled the old missile. It struck the old man in the chest. He staggered back, dropping a revolver.

Jeff wriggled eel-wise to a crouch, then hurled himself at the fallen Colt. He snatched it up and the hammer slid back under his accustomed thumb.

"Accursed *Yanque! Chucho.* Die!" snarled El Viejo, the old one. He threw down on Jeff, who was still crouching with the .47 in his hand.

A bullet crashed into the withered face and El Viejo fell forward almost atop Jeff. He was thoroughly dead. Jeff picked up the second Colt very coolly and tossed it to Comanche. Then they began to prowl about.

The old man had either been looting at Rivas, or some other had left his findings here. Under the thatch of the roof were three Springfields, another pair of Colts, a half-dozen bowies and much ammunition in woven-grass bags. There were, also, shirts evidently stripped from dead Falanginos; trousers; boots; a gold watch.

They dressed and equipped themselves from this hoard, filled a bag with the remnant of the food, then rode out toward Virgin Bay, very much improved in appearance and in feelings. A half-mile nearer the Transit village, they met a shifty-eyed young man, who took to the brush and was stopped only when Jeff dropped a loop over his head after a swift chase. He was sullen until the bight of the lariat was tossed over a limb and Jeff pulled tentatively upon it.

"WALKER is gone—back to Granada, I think. He withdrew from Rivas last night. This—" a gleam of insolent triumph was in his sullen eyes "—is Costa Rican country, now! No *Yanque* dares set foot beyond Granada."

"My goodness!" Comanche drawled sadly to Jeff. "Beats hell how darin' me an' you are, Fella," he broke into Spanish. "Have you not heard the word from Rivas? Why, we—President Mora and ourselves—feared that everyone knew it . . . Ah! It is too sad. We fear that Mora is no longer ruler of Costa Rica. He had to haste away, last night. . . ."

*"Es verdad!"* Jeff said, even more sadly. For it was good to make these Nicaraguans wonder if Mora were not a beaten cock. "It is true. Revolt threatens the great Mora. We left him but last night; we sat first in the house of the final council, then rode out of Rivas. We were with Mora during a part of the battle."

"Why did you not say that you were not of Walker's Falange?" the man said indignantly. "Señores! Another American—you must know him; a big man in suit of brown linen; a man of brown hair and eyes, who cannot speak the Spanish as do you both—leads a scouting party to northward, now. I told him what I have told you."

"Where—is—he?" Jeff said with infinite pains to keep his voice level. 'You mean General Stance, of couse. Mora sent him to make reconnaissance. Of course. . . ."

"Take the next cross-trail, señores. He divided his party. They spread out to scout. They cannot be an hour ahead. I go back, now, to my uncle's house. He has weapons of mine, hidden there. I slipped behind the men of Walker yesterday and looked for some way to injure them. I found three wounded and battered in their heads, then took their weapons. I had a gold watch and some little money too, from one. Farther on, there were two more—in pain."

He grinned sinisterly.

"They were not in pain when I left them. . . . Not so! My knife ended their miseries. One of these had teeth that one could take out, with gold in them. I can sell the gold. . . ."

HE was free of the lariat loop now. Jeff had twitched it from his neck to draw him to talk. But the loop dangling in Jeff's hand lifted and shot out again. It encircled his yellow neck once more. Over a limb, Jeff tossed the end of the rawhide.

"You'll remember Walker" he gritted. "Walker's justice!"

They found the cross-trail the man had mentioned and turned cautiously northward upon it. They went pretty fast and within an hour heard horses ahead of them. taking pains to make little noise they came unheralded upon three hiders sitting stocky ponies in a clearing, looking at forking trails. These were well-armed troopers. There was no sign of others nearby.

"Yaaaiiiaaah! Remember Rivas! Give 'em hell!" Comanche and Jeff roared in a mighty battle-yell.

They charged the Costa Ricans, with reins dropped on their mounts' necks and Colts blazing. There were three empty Costa Rican saddles as finale to that mad, blazing rush. Jeff swung down and shook a dying man.

"Where is your commander General Stance?"

The Costa Rican nodded up the trail to the right, at the triple-fork. Jeff and Commanche rode on, pretty rapidly. This trail was taking them by a short cut, straight toward Granada. They rode on without finding any trace of the rest of Stance's party; rode for three hours.

Then, from a clump of brush beside a narrow trail that opened off that one they followed, a woman cried out gaspingly in Spanish.

"The Tall Texan! *Gracias á dios!* The Tall Texan! Wait! Help her—my mistress."

She came crawling out from the thorny undergrowth, a chocolate-brown and hook-nosed native woman of middle age. Jeff's heart seemed to drop with sight of her and tattered clothing, her thorn-scratched and haggard face. For she was the woman he had seen several times, about the house of the Majors. The servant, particularly, of Nora. . . .

"They came to the house to which we had moved before the old señor died," the woman gasped. "Six Costa Ricans, moving like shadows—like *lobos solos,* the lone wolves. We were packing for return to Granada. *Si!* Like wolves they appeared and encircled the little house. They came in. My mistress was very brave. But they laughed at her tales of Americans, Falanginos, coming quickly."

"But—but what did they do?" Jeff cried frantically. "Where is she—the little señorita, your mistress, now?"

"They rode away with her—the dogs! I slipped out of the house and one fired at me—see my arm! But I looked for aid—and could not find any who would listen. All fear the Costa Ricans of this scouting party."

"Scouting party! Was there, with these, leading them, a big American? A brown-eyed, brown-haired, American?"

"No, señor. Only natives. Dogs of Costa Ricans."

IT was a fork of the trails! Ahead of him, by all the tokens, was Stance. If the original command had been so split as Jeff thought, there could not be many men with Stance. If he and Comanche should ride upon his enemy, there was excellent chance that this time Stance would stay down under his bullet. If, on the other hand, he turned aside to try to follow the men who had taken Nora Majors, he was not apt ever again to find the elusive mur-

derer he had followed so long. But—Nora Majors carried off by Costa Ricans. . . .

As he considered this, flashingly, the face of Matt Stance faded from his mind. He could see nothing but the despairing dark eyes of Nora Majors. Struck with Cal O'Neal she might be, but Jeff Forby knew with whom *he* had been struck! Matt Stance and vengeance. . . . They were small, unimportant trifles, now!

"What the hell you waitin' on?" he snarled at Comanche, then whirled his horse and was at a mad gallop in a bound, heading up the trail on which the woman had come.

A mile, two miles; then three and four and five. At last he could see the little house, to which Nora had brought her father and in which he had died. There was the wooden cross beyond it, over a low mound of jungle-earth. He rode on furiously, to the door. The Costa Ricans had pillaged it thoroughly. He rode around the house and found the trail of the raiders, heading toward the lake-shore on a narrow bridle path.

A mile along this and he saw something white. He bent and scooped it up without slackening speed. A ragged bit of cotton from a dress. Had she dropped it, thinking to guide rescuers? He wondered as they thudded on. . . .

Six Costa Ricans. Three to one. He laughed and Comanche's head jerked a little. Three to one. What those Costa Ricans had to learn. Not that odds of ten to one would have checked their gait a hair's breath. But three to one, today, was hardly fair—to the natives.

"Hear 'em," Comanche gritted suddenly, pushing up beside him, so that the thorny branches slapped them both in the narrow path. "Not fur ahead, neither."

They quickened pace a trifle—all that the blowing nags could encompass. The Costa Ricans must have been confident that their numbers gave them superiority; must have guessed that only two or three men rode after them. For they halted; turned in a little clearing under giant matapalas, to wait.

"Yaaaiiiaaah! Yaaaiiiaaah! Yaaaiiiaah! Give 'em hell!"

With Comanche's battle-yell—Jeff was grimly silent, a furious, blazing-eyed, distorted-faced figure—they rode around the crook of the trail and ducked over the saddle-bows to go like catapulted missiles at the stocky troopers. They were met by a volley. Jeff's horse crashed down. He was hurled over its head.

He struck the ground heavily and one Colt was twitched from his hand. He rolled over as a Costa Rican spurred forward and lowered musket-muzzle to fire. Three shots he fired, almost at random, straight upward. The Costa Rican and his horse dropped.

COMANCHE was firing past the neck of his mount, which he had whirled deftly to serve as barrier against the natives' shots. He dropped two of the riders. Jeff came to his feet, shaking off the shock of the fall. He felt a rap on his flannel shirt under the armpit as he jerked up his Colt to shoot pointblank at the nearest Costa Rican.

There were but two left in the saddles. Jeff rushed at one, brandishing his empty Colt. The bullet from this one's musket went wild and Jeff slid sideway as the frantic trooper clubbed at him with the weapon.

He sprang upward and had the man as a cat takes a mouse; hurled him to the ground as Comanche rode into the remaining one, locked arms about him and somehow managed to drive a bowie into him.

Nora Majors had reined her mount backward off the path. Jeff blinked about him, hunting her. But when he saw her—and saw, too, that there was no enemy alive between them—there came to him abruptly the chilling picture of big, handsome, swaggering Cal O'Neal.

"Better be gettin' back to Granada," he said evenly.

He turned his horse and left Comanche to bring up the rear of their tiny column, with the girl. But they had taken only a few steps when from behind them sounded the thunder of galloping hoofs. Jeff whirled. Three men were coming up the trail. At sight of the sprawling bodies, these halted.

Jeff spun his pony around "on a penny," and hurtled past Comanche and the girl; straight at Matt Stance and his two troopers. The latter had seen enough—on the ground. They howled as if a devil pursued them and jerked their little animals around to fly.

Stance made a weird, fearsome noise. He, too, tried to pull around, but his horse was hard-mouthed. He gave up the effort instantly.

A Colt was already in his hand. He ducked low and the roll of his weapon rang between the walls of the trail. Jeff's pony grunted under the impact of a slug in the breast. Jeff felt tiny touches on his shirt. He knew their meaning as, almost at the same moment, he felt the dull pain that signified a bullet through his shoulder.

But he could not afford to miss, this time, with the recovered Colt, his right-hand gun. He waited until the staggering pony had made another jump, then slid sideway from the saddle, steadied himself on his feet and deliberately fired at Matt Stance's face.

He bent over the big figure. There was no mistake this time! It was Trail's End. And there was a fat money-belt on Stance, next the skin. Grimly, he took it off of his father's murderer and despoiler; opened the pockets. Thin sheaves of notes were there. He riffled them. Better than twenty thousands the scoundrel had carried in large denominations. Jeff shook his head wonderingly. What a hog Stance must have been!

A HAND touched his shoulder. Absently, he looked up. It was Comanche and he was grinning fiercely.

"Got him, huh? An' the money he lifted off your pa?"

"I'll have to keep that part quiet, I reckon," Jeff nodded. "Got to get it back to Texas an' pay off the debts."

"You're goin' back, huh? Well, we'll miss a right fine fightin' man, when The Tall Texan pulls out. But we're sittin' fine, right now. The lick Walker hit Mora will keep the Costa Ricans quiet behind Rivas barricades a spell.

"It'll bring him in as president, you bet. So while I'd personal like to have you around, Jeff, the's no augurin' about you havin' a job to do, in Texas."

"What about the gal? Nora?"

"We'll take her to Granada an' I'll tell Walker I got to go back to the States."

"Well—that is—well—you go tell her about it. Go on! Want that I should take you by the off-ear an' drag you?"

Jeff, when he had bandaged his shoulder, found Nora Majors sitting her pony and staring up-trail. He mumbled his brief forecast of the future; his future. She nodded, without looking at him.

"I haven't thanked you for taking me out of the hands of those—those animals. I thank you, now—more than words can express, Mr. Forby. And—and I wish The Tall Texan all success in his future life. All success and—all happiness."

"Happiness?" Jeff cried impulsively. "Happiness!" he repeated, bitterly. "Who's talkin' about happiness?"

"You won't be happy?" Now, she turned her pony and regarded him. In the dark eyes, far back, hovered a flash of—Jeff Forby could not interpret it. "Why—I'm sorry."

Staring somberly at her—and seeing also, a big, swaggering figure at her side, Jeff shook his head quickly.

"You know I won't be happy—up there—by myself. But what's that got to do with it? Cal O'Neal—"

"Oh, yes. Yes! Cal O'Neal, of course," she nodded. "I had forgotten Cal."

"I wish I could!"

"Then—why don't you?" she asked him, very demurely.

"I have!" he cried out. "You—I never had an idea you'd look sideway at me, even!" He looked down at the little dusky head against his arm. "You'll go back to Texas with me, honey—honey? You really will?"

"I really will," she nodded. "You see, Jeff, there was only one trouble with The Tall Texan. . . . He could fight and he could ride. He was very handsome. He was in almost every way very much a man. But he had one lack—"

"One lack?" Jeff frowned. "What d' you mean?"

"He didn't have a voice. Now that he's a complete man—"

"Granada!" Comanche Carruthers grunted, coming up behind them. "Come along. Got to make Granada."

"Granada," Jeff nodded. "Funny. . . . When *we* say Granada, it means Graytown—New Orleans—Texas—Trail's End."

# Last of the Washoans

By BENJAMIN F. FERRILL

**"When the buffaloes return to the valley—then I shall tell the white man what he wants to know!"—so ran the stubborn answer of Braying Horse, Last of the Washoans.**

BULL CASWELL, a huge thick-shouldered giant of a man, rounded the last turn in the trail and strode across to where Braying Horse sat. Resting his Winchester rifle against an outcropping of rock, he silently sat down before the dried-up old Indian.

Bull Caswell was as unmistakably a part of the West as the old Chief he visited. He wore a wide-brimmed hat of gray felt. His heavy woolen shirt, open at the throat, exposed a great hairy, muscle-corded chest. Around his waist a bright red sash had been carefully wrapped and caught up with a big silver buckle. Worn corduroy trousers stuffed into the top of high laced leather boots completed his outfit.

From his lookout position, high up on the side of San Loreto Mountain, Braying Horse had watched the man coming slowly up the steep trail. He knew the visitor well, for Bull Caswell was the only man besides himself who lived in all that vast and lonely region. But when the newcomer had presently rounded the last point on the trail and strode across to where he sat, the Indian gave no sign of recognition. There was no friendship between the two. And Braying Horse both hated and feared the newcomer.

San Loreto Valley bordered much of the old gold country of the days of Forty-Nine. Yet the valley itself had produced little. Not enough gold had ever been found there to establish a camp. This gold, such as could be found, was soon gone. And with it went the gold hunters. Then had come another long space of quiet, broken only by the howl of a coyote, or the scream of an eagle. Only Braying Horse remained from that time.

It was natural and fitting, however, that he should stay. He had been born in the valley, a chief of his tribe. Outside of the few on reservations he was the last of the Washoans, of the Tonkawan stock. And

he had defied the best efforts of the Government agent and the Missionary, and time itself to remove him. A proud, pathetic old figure now, he ruled a land of silence.

Eying Braying Horse with shrewd, cold eyes, Bull Caswell sought for a way to open the conversation which would be favorable to the mission he had in mind.

"I was down to Cactus Mesa a couple of days ago, Chief," he began; "and I make it a point never to forget my friends. I says to myself, 'There's old Braying Horse back there on the mountain side. He lives all alone except for that reservation Indian who brings him grub once in a while. Likely he's out of tobacco. So I'll get him some!'" Bull reached down and from between the top of the red sash and his trouser band, he drew out a small tinfoil-wrapped package of fine cut pipe tobacco.

Braying Horse eyed the tobacco in hungry silence. The leathery skin of his face, covered with hundreds of fine wrinkles, twitched slightly. For nearly a minute he hesitated, then weakened, and nodded grudgingly.

"It is good. I have no tobacco. But I take no gifts from the white man. I have in my teepee the pelt of a wolf, fine, dark, long haired. I killed it in winter when the fur is finest. I give you the wolf skin in exchange. It will bring many times the worth of the tobacco."

Such a speech—unfriendly as it sounded—was unusual from Braying Horse. Never before had he so willingly accepted a gift, or so quickly repaid it. Bull Caswell considered it a favorable omen.

"Why shorely; that's fine, Chief," his voice boomed out in false heartiness. "But you didn't gimme time to finish talkin'. I was a goin' to say that I had also brought this red sash here for you. Real silk it is, with a regular silver buckle." He unwound the red sash from his waist, spreading it in tempting creases before the old Indian.

Far back in their sunken sockets, the beady black eyes of Braying Horse smoldered in sudden suspicion. He took no notice of the red sash.

"The white man gives for a reason," he said. "There is no friendship in the gift."

"Aw now, Chief, you got me plumb wrong. I just come up heer to be friendly with you. You're such a wise ol' man I likes to talk with you."

Bull eased himself back on a flat rock and took a sack of tobacco and a book of cigarette papers from the pocket of his shirt. Knowing that the Chief could not roll a cigarette Bull rolled one for him and laid the little cylinder of tobacco on the sash. Rolling another for himself, he lit it and nodded toward the extra cigarette.

"Smoke up, Chief. It'll beat yore pipe. Cigarette smoke's good for old lungs." Bull paused a moment, and then asked craftily, "How old are you anyhow, Chief?"

Braying Horse picked up the cigarette and placed it between lips that were as tight and narrow as a slit in a piece of leather. Caswell held a match for him. The Chief took several deep, lung-filling sucks of the smoke before he spoke.

"I have forgotten the years as you count them," he said. 'I only remember things that have happened."

"What do you remember?" Bull put the question with dry lips, hoping to hear the story of the buried stream of San Loreto.

"I remember when buffaloes roamed the valley in numbers beyond the reckoning of man. I remember when the smoke of the Indian fires rose from the valley."

"Yeah, yeah," Bull prompted him tensely.

"I remember," went on Braying Horse, "when gold was first discovered in the country. I was already a warrior then."

"You say that you were full grown then? Well, let's see now—eighteen hundred and forty-nine to nineteen hundred and twenty-seven. And just say you was twenty-one years old then. Add seventy-eight years to that." Bull whistled in astonishment and eyed the old Indian with hard, cunning eyes. "That would make you about ninety-nine years old. Gawd!"

Bull looked at the Indian's withered, claw-like hands and studied how his frame was shrunken and bent. "I s'pose you got the goods all right when it comes to years, Chief," he admitted. "Fer a fact, you ain't no youngster no more." He paused, and tried to make his voice very careless and friendly as he went on. "I s'pose then you must have seen the landslide heer on the mountains somewhere along about that time—when you was a young feller?"

"Yes," Braying Horse nodded. "It was but a little while after the death of the man called Trevis. Trevis was the first white man I ever saw. He came alone prospecting for gold. He found much gold in the valley. Not the scale gold that is found in the river sands, but the pellets of nugget gold that become lodged in rock pockets of the fast-running streams. Two other white men came then. They quarreled with Trevis over the gold. He fought for the gold and for the ownership of the stream on which he found the gold. He was killed.

"Trevis was my friend. I learned the white man's language from him. And one of the men that killed him bore the same name that you bear—Caswell." The Chief's voice died away into wrathful silence.

Bull watched the old Indian with narrow-slit, cunning eyes. "You *do* know where the stream come over the hills before it was changed by the landslide don't yuh?"

Braying Horse nodded in silent agreement.

"An' ain't you never goin' ter tell me?" Bull Caswell lost his patience and snarled the question out harshly.

There was just the shadow of a grim and bitter humor in the smoldering eyes of Braying Horse when he spoke again. "Yes. When the country is once more as it was before the earth changed, then I will tell how the earth was before *it* changed. When the buffaloes return to the valley—when the smoke of the Indians' fires rises straight up toward the level of the mountain—when the teepees show as thick in the valley as the mounds of the prairie dog on the desert—then I will tell the white man how the country was before he came. Then I shall tell the white man what he wants to know."

"Why, you damned old leather skinned coyote bait!" Bull rose and towered above the sitting man. "Tryin' to kid me? You'll tell when the buffaloes return, heh? You don't want a very big order filled, do you, old-timer? Well, I'll tell you pardner, them buffaloes and them Indians is more gone than that stream bed is; no matter if I can't find it. Why don't you leave the country if you don't like white-folks—there's the reservation."

Braying Horse calmly returned Caswell's glare. "I was here before the white men came. I want nothing. I shall die here."

"Why you toothless old buzzard! I have a notion to—" Bull Caswell took a step forward, his hands clenched, and his face murderous. Then he stopped abruptly, every nerve quivering. Some sixth sense of animal caution had warned him that he and Braying Horse were not alone. Gooseflesh began to rise along the back of his bristly neck. His head snapped hastily around toward the teepee.

Protruding plainly from the dark doorway was the muzzle of a large bore Winchester rifle. Braying Horse had not mentioned that the tall reservation Indian who occasionally visited him with supplies, was there; and Bull had forgotten to inquire. It had been an almost deadly oversight he realized now.

Bull Caswell had been in tight places before, and his mind worked swiftly. Licking his dry lips, he continued loudly. "I was just goin' to say I had a notion to take back this red sash I give you."

He stood well away from the old Indian and slowly picked up the sash from where it lay on the rock. Out of the corner of his eye then, he saw the gun muzzle disappear.

"I didn't mean to give it to you no way 'less you told me 'bout where that buried stream bed lay," Bull added spitefully. "I don't believe you know anyway. . . . But listen! From the information my grandpa give out there must be round half a million or more dollars in gold pockets on the bottom of that unworked watercourse. And I'll still be lookin' for it when you ain't sittin' up here no more—get me? You're a jinx—you ol' dodo!"

Bull Caswell wadded the sash up under his arm, not stopping to put it on, and stalked off down the mountain in great furious strides.

SO things stood. A week passed. Two weeks. A month. The world beyond the valley moved on as before. Sixty miles south at Desert City, the seat of San Loreto County, things began to take on a holiday aspect. In a short time it would be the anniversary of the discovery of gold in that region and the county authorities intended to exceed all previous years as to celebrations. There would be a picnic during the day and a big dance that night.

Gold prizes for the most picturesque '49 costume; for the oldest inhabitant, for the longest set of whiskers and for the straightest pistol shooting were to be awarded.

And, in addition, the old pioneer rancher, J. A. Carlisle, who operated a one hundred thousand acre ranch in the short grass country to the north, had promised to furnish an attraction of his own, the nature of which he refused to divulge.

It remained, however, for Bull Caswell to be the first to discover the secret. Standing in the door of his two-room, piñon-log cabin shortly after daybreak one morning, he glanced toward the head of the valley, rubbed his eyes, and gazed again.

Motionless upon a pinnacle of rock half a mile away stood an Indian, his figure outlined with cameo clearness in the early sunlight. Swearing gutturally Bull wheeled back into the cabin and returned with his Winchester rifle. Working the lever he threw a cartridge into the barrel. Never taking his eyes from the motionless figure he slid out of the door. Stooping low he made for a long tree-covered ridge that stretched across the valley, between himself and the Indian.

Once behind the protection of the ridge, Caswell rose. Holding his gun ready, he slowly parted the branches of a piñon pine, his eyes popping in amazement as he did so. Spreading from edge to edge across the open glade before him, a herd of buffaloes grazed calmly on the bunch grass. To the left of the buffaloes, on a smooth elevation near the creek, the smoke of half a dozen camp fires rose. Moving about the fires or sitting upon their blankets were Indians; two dozen or more, in full tribal dress, ornaments glittering, feathers streaming, bare copper-colored chests and arms gleaming softly against the rocky background.

"Lor', Lor' Gawd!" Caswell gasped.

Inch by inch he began to ease the branches into place, half turning to make a hasty retreat. Suddenly then he spied something that caused his breath to hiss through his teeth in relief. At a fire a little apart from the Indians' camp he saw the broad, gray-white spread of a western Stetson. For a minute longer Bull Caswell studied the assembly doubtfully. Then with his rifle once more held forward alertly he edged from the piñon thicket and hurried across the open space.

The hat owner, a lean, puncher-garbed figure, glanced up quickly. "Mornin'," he greeted, studying Caswell's burly figure in mild surprise. "I didn't reckon there was nobody livin' near about."

"You must not have," Caswell said sullenly. "What's the meanin' of all this outfit in my valley? Figure to settle here an' drive me out?"

"Nope." The sunburnt puncher's grin faded somewhat under Caswell's hostile stare. "I'm just chaperonin' this outfit down to Desert City to take part in the celebration. The buffaloes are from the J. A. Carlisle ranch, and the Indians belong to the reservation up back of his holdings. The town folks asked that the ranch furnish some sort of ropin' or ridin' stunt for the event. And old J. A. got the idea of stagin' an old style buffalo hunt, with real Indians et cetry. Course the arrows will be blunt though. Them critters are too valuable to kill outright."

The tall puncher paused and then added, with a nod toward the cooking utensils near the fire: "You might as well set and eat yourself a snack since you're here. And you needn't worry none 'bout yore valley. I come down it to keep off the regular trail road, as old J. A. wanted to keep his act a secret till it got plumb to town. We just camped here for the night. We'll be movin' on in an hour or so; and I'll be responsible that there ain't nothin' disturbed. . . . Dan Runnion's my name."

Bull acknowledged the introduction with a grunt. "Caswell's my name," he said.

For several minutes he ate silently. Then with the edge of his appetite dulled sufficiently for conversational purposes, he nodded toward the Indians.

"Swell bunch of redskins them birds make! Look at 'um! Slick, fat and well fed as tabby cats from living on government grub. I bet ev'ry man jack of 'um 'ud starve if you turned them loose with just bows and arrows. I'd like to show them old Braying Horse that lives up there on that cliff." Bull Caswell jerked his thumb toward a distant ledge, high up on the mountainside. "That's *my* notion of a Indian. There he stays, near a hundred years old and wrinkled up like a prune; but still spiteful as hell at white folks."

Dan Runnion gazed up the narrow, rocky

trail, his eyes lighting in sudden interest. "You mean to say there's a hundred-year-old Indian up there. And that he's still got a grudge at white people? Gosh, I'd like to get him and take him to the celebration."

"That's about the size of it," Caswell said. "At any rate he dang shore ain't took no shine to *me*. I bet I've visited him fifty times, and he was just as closed mouthed the last time I seen him as he was the first. Says he'll talk when the buffaloes return—"

Caswell stopped suddenly as if he'd been shot. A look, first dazed and wondering, then crafty and evil, crossed his face. Rising quickly he wiped his greasy fingers on his red sash and picked up his Winchester.

"Got to be going," he mumbled hastily. "Just thought of—something I got to do."

Then as if it were an afterthought he paused and added, "I wouldn't worry none 'bout that old Indian after all, if I was you. It's a hard climb to where he lives; and he don't like company. I'm pretty sure he'd put a Winchester bullet in you 'fore you ever reached his teepee!" The words were brittle and menacing.

Sensing the threat, Dan Runnion rose, his eyes narrowing dangerously. For a moment, he stared wrathfully at Caswell's broad back, half minded to shout some fighting word after the retreating figure. Then remembering the men and animals in his charge he seated himself by the fire again.

Dan Runnion glanced at the buffalo herd, and at the Indians about the fires. Then as if unable to keep his eyes from the mountainside, he again gazed up the rocky trail—a fighting stare in his eyes.

"That feller Caswell is up to some devilment, sure as you're a foot high," he said aloud. "And it'd be a plumb shame to let him get away with it after what he said. That old Indian may need help too—and not even old J. A. hisself would go off and leave a man needin' help."

With his motive satisfactorily explained to his conscience, Dan Runnion stood up suddenly. "Hey, Red Cloud," he called to a tall Indian wearing the headdress of a Chief, "take charge of things till I get back. If I don't show up in a couple of hours, come up and look for me."

Almost before the words were out of his mouth, Runnion was on his way, his high-heeled boots stumbling and sliding on the nearly perpendicular trail. Once, some fifty yards up the mountainside he turned and looked back, to see Red Cloud sitting just as he had left him, staring down the valley.

Giving all his attention to the trail ahead, Runnion half walked and half climbed steadily upward. Although hardly ten minutes had elapsed since Caswell had started, there was no sign of the man ahead. Only the fresh marks where boot heels had scraped against a rock or sank into the occasional pockets of gravel convinced him that Caswell was still on the trail.

Several times, red faced and perspiring, Runnion paused to rest and warily scan the rocks above. Finally, just as he was on the point of giving up the pursuit he stopped, listening tensely. From a point a short distance higher up had come a shout.

Redoubling his efforts Runnion scrambled a few yards higher, rounded a smooth-sided boulder, and came out all at once on the level, overhanging shelf that Caswell had pointed out.

At the back of the level space, close against the upslanting rocky wall, stood a weather beaten Indian teepee. Winding away on the left a faint trail lost itself among the boulders higher up. As he looked the teepee door flap was violently jerked aside and the burly form of Bull Caswell backed through the opening, dragging the struggling and protesting form of a withered old Indian.

"Come out of there," Caswell roared, kicking viciously at one of the Indian's braced feet. "You said when the buffaloes returned—and I've brought them! Come and see peaceful, or I'll pull your dried up old carcass plumb into!"

"That'll be enough of that, Caswell!" Runnion's voice, sharp as a whip-lash, cut the air.

Instantly releasing the Indian, Caswell turned, and lunged for his Winchester that leaned against a nearby ledge. Seeing the leveled gun in Runnion's hand then, he stopped, his eyes blazing in a hideous killing fury.

"You keep out of this," he snarled. "I got private business with this old guy and I won't be stopped by no man." Watching Runnion's revolver with crafty eyes,

Caswell turned back toward where Braying Horse stood.

Runnion stepped quickly across to the Indian's side. "Leave the old man alone! Do you hear!" he snapped. Noticing that Caswell wore no gun belt, Runnion lowered his revolver and turned to the Indian.

Suddenly then, a hoarse croak of warning broke from Braying Horse's withered lips.

Taking advantage of Runnion's momentarily lowered gun, Bull Caswell had jerked a small, all-metal .41 derringer from beneath his red sash. For a moment Dan Runnion saw the wicked little pistol, only the muzzle showing as Caswell's huge paw gripped it. Then his view was cut off by the body of Braying Horse who had sprang between them! At the same moment Caswell fired, the gun almost against the Indian's chest.

Braying Horse sank silently down. With a quickness that was amazing for a man of his size, Caswell's arm shot forward and then knocked Runnion's gun from his hand.

Bare-handed, like two huge savage animals, Dan Runnion and Bull Caswell clenched.

Gripping his adversary like a bear, Caswell bent Runnion backward, striving by sheer weight and muscle to end the fight at once by snapping his opponent's spine.

With the breath momentarily crushed from his lungs, Runnion staggered backward, lost his footing and fell, carrying Caswell with him. Locked in a viselike grip, striking, kicking and gouging in a battle that each knew must end in death for one, the two rolled about the rocky ledge.

It took but a few seconds for Runnion to see that he was no match for the huge brute of a man he struggled with. Caswell had the strength of a bear in his tremendous, muscle-corded chest and arms. He fought with a deadly, killing fury that left Runnion dazed by its savage swiftness; and once when Caswell momentarily gained the upper hand he took advantage of the opportunity to jerk Runnion's shoulders clear of the rock and crash the back of his head against the stone with horrible force.

Again and again Runnion sought to roll within reach of his revolver, that lay nearby. And each time he did so, Caswell drove home short, sledge hammer blows to the other's head and neck.

Suddenly also Runnion saw something that chilled him through and through. In struggling about the ledge the two rolled within a few feet of the brink of the cliff! In a swift, sickening panorama Runnion again glimpsed the dizzy drop to the rocky, tree-grown ledge below.

Bull Caswell saw the nearness also and craftily prepared to take advantage of it. Unexpectedly releasing his grip, he rose to his feet. Clutching Runnion by the neck of his heavy shirt and by his gun belt he began to lift Runnion bodily from the ground to hurl him into space over the edge of the cliff.

Winded, bleeding and beaten, with the mountain and valley spinning crazily before his eyes, Dan Runnion made one last desperate effort. Jacknifing suddenly he drew his knees close against his body, planted his feet in Caswell's chest and straightened like a flash to his full length again.

Clutching desperately at the air, Bull Caswell staggered backward, poised a moment on the cliff edge and then shot into space! He was still falling as Runnion peered downward, the scarf which had become partly unwound from his waist in the fight streaming out like a long devil's tail.

Dan Runnion rose dazedly to his feet and picked up his pistol from where it lay nearby and with the toe of his boot he kicked the little single shot derringer off the cliff.

Walking over to where Braying Horse lay, he saw with some surprise that the Indian was still alive; and he bent over and shook the old man gently.

"Anything I can do for you, Chief?" Runnion put the question cheerfully, but his eyes told him that Braying Horse was dying swiftly; that death was but a matter of minutes.

Braying Horse tried twice to speak before words came.

"I have no friendship—" he began slowly. Then as a twinge of pain brought his thoughts back to his wound, he changed. "The man Caswell wished to show me something. He is an evil man. I would not come from the teepee because I was

alone." Braying Horse ceased and lay silent.

Runnion thought for a moment; and there was a catch in his voice as he spoke. "Chief—you took a bullet that was meant for me—what made you do it? You say you have no friendship for the white men?"

Again, with a mighty effort, Braying Horse pulled himself back from the land of shadows; and the fire that nearly a hundred years of life had failed to dim, glowed bright in his sunken eyes.

"Braying Horse—takes no gifts—from the white man, *not even the gift of life!* If you had been killed it would have been because of me. Therefore I sprang between you, taking for myself the wound that would have been given because of me."

"But what had Caswell agin you?" Runnion asked amazed at the old man's clear reasoning.

"I shall talk when the buffaloes return," the answer came faintly.

"What's that, Chief?" Runnion bent low, his interest quickened by the puzzling reference to buffaloes.

"I shall talk when the buffaloes come again; when the Indians return." Braying Horse spoke with an effort, his lips foaming and bloody from the deep wound in his chest.

"Buffaloes?" Runnion repeated puzzled. . . . "Damn my dumbness, the old man wants to see the buffalo herd and the Indians," the thought struck him suddenly. "Why sure, Chief, there's buffaloes, scads of them. Indians too. Come look." Carefully he carried the dying Indian to the edge of the flat overhanging rock.

The promise had brought a momentary return of life to Braying Horse. Dimly he stared down into the valley.

It appeared even as Dan Runnion had promised. From before the doorways of a dozen buckskin teepees, the smoke of the camp fires rose straight up toward the level of the mountains. Feathered braves came and went along the paths. In the clear fresh sunlight a band of buffaloes grazed in an open space. Faintly then there came to their ears the deep vibrant *throb, throb, throb* of an Indian drum.

"See, Chief, can you see them?" Runnion asked.

"Yes!" In his excitement the old man's voice shrilled high and delirious. "It is as it was! They have returned! Get my rifle, and the head-dress of eagle feathers that marks me as Chief of the Washoans. I must go down to the council. . . . The drums. Do you hear the drums?"

"Yes, that's right," Runnion said. But knowing the sudden strength was from excitement only he made no effort to get the things. "Sure," he went on, "we'll get your rifle and go down the trail."

Then, as if remembering his obligation, Braying Horse spoke again:

"Before the land slide came, the water of the stream broke over the mountain from a gorge behind my teepee! From this cliff edge it leaped in a straight fall to the ledge below. From that point on to the valley floor it is again covered by earth. When the mountains shook the stream ceased to flow by this route, running instead through a newly opened way and reaching the valley higher up. The Indians had no love for the white men, or for the gold that brought them. So when the stream changed they scattered rocks and earth, destroying all signs of the watercourse that had not already been covered. Trees grew over the earth and all was forgotten!"

Braying Horse paused, choking, then finished faintly. "I go now to the council. I have repaid you for bringing—the buffaloes—again."

The voice died away, stopped.

Dan Runnion raised his head and critically studied the outline of the rocky wall that rose behind the teepee. Peering over the cliff he gazed far downward to where Caswell's body lay—a broken lifeless shape. Then he studied the rocky, piñon grown slope stretching from this second shelf to the valley below. There was no doubt that Braying Horse had spoken the truth!

Once more Runnion gently shook the old man, but there was no response. Carefully he eased Braying Horse back on the flat rock. Picking up one of the mummy-like hands he felt of the wrist for a long minute. There was not the faintest sign of a pulse. Braying Horse was dead.

Half sheepishly and half reverently, Runnion removed his hat. "He's holding council now, along a new frontier," he said. "He was a square guy, and a man of his word. And I hope to gosh he's still a Chief wherever it is he's gone!"

# Famous Guns and

**Eighteen men ended their lives at the knell of Billy the Kid's long-barreled .45. . . . Murieta and Jack Three Fingers, those ruthless killers from below the**

MILLIONS of words, in fact and fiction, have been penned and typed about the old-time gunslingers of the West—but what about the guns of the killers? What kind of guns did they use—and how did they mark them?

I have just held in my hand a gun that played a big part in the killing of thirty-eight men. Instantly, a question leaps into mind: Was it notched? No. Not a notch!

Some time ago, Billy the Kid's favorite Colt lay exposed to my view. It was in the big living-room of Bill Hart's mansion on the Hill of the Winds in Southern California.

Did the Kid's gun bear any notches? None!

Although much has been said, in fiction and out of fiction, about the grim business of notching, the fact remains that the lethal weapons of some of the West's most picturesque characters haven't a suggestion of a notch.

Of course, there are undoubtedly plenty of notched guns in the West. But that's another story.

Bill Hart, who is a close student of the West, old and new, is an inveterate collector of properly authenticated guns. He is authority for the statement that only the lowest type of killer cut notches on gun butts.

Hart has only one gun showing notches. This, he explains without reservation, was owned by a bloodthirsty killer who was eventually cut down in Dodge City. Hart has examined and checked hundreds of guns. He is most emphatic on this point.

AND now we come to first-hand consideration of one of the most famous Colt's the fighting West has ever known. This is the death-spitting gun owned and operated by Billy the Kid.

Billy the Kid's long-barreled .45, with its dark record, now snuggles peacefully under glass on a California ranch. It belongs to Bill Hart.

The Kid's gun came into possession of Hart after a painstaking search and the most eloquent persuasion. The narration of this chase would make a lengthy story in itself.

Jim East, Captain Austin and other noted Westerners figured in the negotiations and the ironclad authentication of the gun. East who died recently in Arizona, was one of

# Quick Killers

By T. W. DEAVER

**Line, carved their terrible trail with cold sharp steel. . . . Each maverick packed his favorite weapon, and each knew how to use it!**

the men who tracked the kid to his lair. He knew the gun well.

The Colt probably did not cost the Kid more than a few dollars—if anything at all—but it cost Bill Hart plenty. He smiles when quizzed about this. It is whispered that a stack of gold changed hands.

One experiences a queer feeling in handling the Kid's old hog-leg. This venerable Colt, worn slick by usage, is credited with a record of eighteen men.

Who were they? Human beings, all—with hope, ambition, and desire! But hope was deferred and ambition was cut short in the hoarse roar of the Colt. Today the victims crumble in lonely unmarked graves.

The Kid is reputed to have killed between twenty-one and twenty-five men — not counting stray Indians and an occasional Mexican. This is the gun that halted most of them.

It is the weapon that Deputy Stewart took off the Kid after a Southwestern sheriff shot his horse and starved him out.

The complete record of the gun's past performances is not quite clear. No one seems to know positively when or where the Kid got the Colt. Stole it, likely as not. He was not above that sort of thing.

But the record is clear as to how he came to part with it. Bill Hart's version of the transaction substantially is as follows:

Stewart, to the Kid: "Kid, can I have your six-shooter?"

The Kid, to Stewart: "I don't care who has it—as long as I can't have it."

The Kid was then placed in custody, but later escaped, brutally murdering his two jailers.

The gun, however, remained in Stewart's possession. It was not among the rifles and other weapons owned by the Kid when he was shot and killed by Sheriff Pat Garrett.

LET us study this grim weapon a moment. Others have done so, we may rest assured, but few of these remain to tell the tale. One thing is certain. The Kid made a very careful study of it. He made a close study of all his guns. That was an integral part of his deadly business. No doubt he did many things to some of them.

But what did he do to this, his favorite six-gun? What could he do to it?

He did several things to make it more deadly. In the first place, the sight has been filed off.

There is a little dent—but no sight.

Unquestionably, this was done to speed up the draw. It would likewise prevent holster-hanging.

The Kid had to be careful about this. The slightest delay was apt to prove fatal.

Billy the Kid, according to my old friend

Charles Siringo, was a veritable flash when it came to the draw.

He not only wanted to be first—he had to be first. This, too, was an important part of his business. He must draw flashingly and strike like lightning if he wanted to live.

From the records, we must assume that the Kid did everything possible to bring this about. He practiced long and thoughtfully.

All the world has been told, more or less correctly, just how fast the Kid actually could draw.

But it remained for Charlie Siringo—famous throughout the West as a cowboy-detective—to demonstrate the exact manner in which this amazing youth went into action.

I talked with Siringo about this. He showed me how the Kid did it. Siringo died recently after a colorful career in the old West. He left behind a rich grist of authentic gun-lore.

Siringo not only saw but talked to the Kid on many occasions. He encountered him in New Mexico and elsewhere. He had seen him puncture tin cans and perforate jack-rabbits. He had also watched him as his guns blazed against unfortunate human beings.

"The Kid," Siringo said to me, "was the fastest thing I ever seen with a gun. And I seen a lot uh them.

"He was not only quick on the trigger. He was chain lightin' on the draw. Every move was a picture. He was p'ison with both hands.

"Cost him no effort, though. Not half so much effort as it cost some of the fellers he got. They thought they were fast, I reckon. But the Kid was faster. He had to be.

"What hands the Kid had! They was little—almost like a woman's. But plumb sensitive—and strong. His fingers was educated.

"The Kid had a way with a gun. Don't know jist how to tell you. What's that word? Caress? Yes, that's it. The Kid, he caressed the trigger. No fumblin' or foolin'. Jist a gentle caress. This done the work.

"Them hair-triggers of his was quick as a dog's ears. He kept 'em like that. That's how he could shoot so good. Speed? It was enough to send a shiver down a man's spine!"

I heard Bill Hart teasing Siringo about this. Bill said:

"Aw, come on, now, Charlie You got to admit others are fast, too. You've seen me draw, haven't you?"

Faithful old Siringo wanted to be loyal to both friends. He grinned sheepishly. Then he drawled:

"Wal, Bill, I ain't seen many men as c'n draw and shoot as fast as you. But—well, Bill, you see, the Kid, he was fast, too!"

THE Kid's gun is heavy. It makes a comfortable handful. But it is not too heavy. A man can swing it easily enough. Siringo said the Kid handled it as readily as a child manages a bone rattle.

The Colt is in good condition. It has been given fine care by Stewart, Hart and others. The springs and screws seem remarkably well-preserved.

The gun has not been fired for fifty years. Hart loaned it to Johnny Mack Brown, to make a movie, but there was a strict understanding about firing it.

"That would be desecration," Hart explained. "As far as I know, the Kid was the last to fire the Colt. I want it to remain like that. I wouldn't fire it for anything on earth—unless I had to, in an emergency."

Another significant thing in connection with the Kid's gun is this: The "second" has been removed.

That is to say, the hammer goes clear back without an intermediate stop. This does away with the double "click" and increases the firing speed. Things so essential to the Kid!

The trigger is peculiarly sensitive. The hammer spring is as strong as ever.

The number on the gun is 70-261. The Colt has few other marks. There are, of course, the usual factory identifications.

But, oddly, on the metal strip on the butt of the gun, a name is engraved. That name is—Billy!

I was curious about this. I asked Charlie Siringo why it was done. Siringo grinned and explained:

"That name? It was because of the Kid's vanity. He was funny that way. One of them travelin' engravers come to town.

The Kid seen him doin' things. I reckon it sorter fascinated him. Anyway, he let the feller cut his name on the gun. Guess he wanted to show the writin' to his lady friends."

This trait, while hard to understand, seems in keeping with the Kid's more personal attributes. He was quite a dandy—and very keen for the dark-eyed señoritas of New Mexico.

Siringo said he had a childish yearning for fancy trappings. Flashy Mexican outfits gripped his imagination. He had, as a rule, a nice wardrobe. Some of the duds he bought. Others he confiscated. These he wore to the dances in Lincoln and Clayton.

The Kid, it appears, was also covetous of other men's guns. He had a number of six-shooters. Many of these he "lifted."

Siringo told me about one incident which bears this out. The Kid had shot down Sheriff Brady. This was near the famous McSween store in Lincoln—a spot which played a tragic part in the bloody Lincoln County war.

After Brady fell the Kid decided he wanted his rifle and his six guns.

"Come on—le's go get 'em!" he yelled to a companion, a man named Wayte.

Brady's companion, one Matthews, opened a raking fire from a nearby adobe. A bullet crashed into Billy's thigh.

But the Kid got the guns. And he remained in the road long enough to pump another bullet into Brady's helpless body.

The Kid, according to Siringo, had an odd trick of doing this. None knew just why—whether for his own peculiar pleasure, or to make sure that his victim would never rise to fire another shot. Siringo didn't pretend to explain it. He said:

"The Kid just done it—that's all."

THOSE who waste sentiment on outlaws say that the Kid did a lot of things because of humanitarian reasons. Some say he fired the last bullet as a mercy shot. Others less maudlin tell us that it was done because of the Kid's blood lust.

Siringo, who knew many killers, had his own ideas about this business of sentiment. He growled:

"A killer was a killer. This orter explain everything. I seen some bad ones—an' mighty few good ones.

"I never wasted no tears on any uh them. They shot first and explained afterwards. The other feller was polished off quick. Before he had time to think or draw. Some got it in the back. Maybe some of them killers warned a man—like the story-books says—but I never met none of them. Anyway, I reckon there wasn't much mercy about it. Killers ain't built that way."

I asked Siringo to tell me about some of the other guns owned by Billy the Kid.

He said the Kid had a number of weapons. Siringo recalled a carbine, or short rifle, and a sawed-off shotgun. He also owned a derringer or two. Siringo said he was not very keen for these. His pet gun was the .45. He had several. The one Bill Hart now has was the one Billy cherished.

THE KID was not alone in his leaning toward the .45. Killers all over the West had a strong preference for this type.

It is true, of course, that many other types were used by Western bad men. I have examined many collections.

Colonel Harrison, who used to live near Tucson, had a very remarkable assortment. His cases contained some of the guns used by famous bandits along the border and in Mexico. He had some of the weapons which were owned by Joaquin Murieta and Jack Three Fingers.

Bill Hart and Tom Mix have some rare types. Hoot Gibson owns others. Some of these, properly authenticated, belonged to notorious killers.

It is both interesting and fascinating to examine these old guns. I made a close study of the weapons used by that flashing killer, Joaquin Murrieta. I have held the daggers wielded by Jack Three Fingers. What a pair of butchers they were!

Joaquin Murieta was born in Mexico and he came to California in search of gold and adventure. He seems to have turned bandit and killer after a series of bitter experiences. Renegade whites murdered his brother and mistreated his wife. Murieta ran amuck. He swore he would kill every white man he met in his roamings, and he almost made good his oath.

Murietta is reputed to have killed more men than Billy the Kid. Some claim he ran up a list larger than the combined killings of the Kid and the Butch Cassidy

gang. But one of his men may have been responsible for much of this.

This was Jack Three Fingers, Murieta's most ruthless butcher, who killed for the love of killing. His real name was Manuel Garcia and he was a fiend incarnate with a knife.

Jack Three Fingers had an overpowering desire to kill and maim defenseless Chinamen. It is said that he ruthlessly butchered nearly sixty of them.

Despite Jack's cruel atrocities, Murieta seems to have lacked the moral courage or the power to halt his inhuman practices. He remonstrated with him—but that was all.

On one occasion Jack is said to have sacrificed twelve gibbering Chinamen for the mere gratification of his blood lust. He told his renegade companions he would show them a new way to put out a campfire. Then he held a bleeding Chinaman over the fire until the flames were extinguished.

Nor was he adverse to slaughtering and maltreating Americans. Once he caught two unsuspecting miners in a gulch. He stabbed them and while they were still alive he undressed them. Then he tortured them unmercifully. He cut out their tongues and plucked out their eyeballs. When he finally left, the bodies were almost unrecognizable.

NEITHER Murieta nor Jack Three Fingers seemed very particular about their guns. They were always changing. But there was one thing they gave the strictest attention. This was the selection and care of their knives.

Both were good shots, but each had a knife complex. Murieta was terrible with sword and stiletto. The first white man he killed died by the knife. Shortly thereafter he killed twelve men in five days. Some of these he shot. Others he knifed.

Several of the revolvers used by Murieta are to be found in certain sections of the West. L. G. Thornton showed me two of these.

One was a Texas Colt. These, now very rare, were made by Colt at the old plant in Paterson.

These guns were in great demand in Mexico and through the Southwest. Authorities differ as to the respective caliber. I have heard some men say they ranged as high as .50, but I doubt it. Colt officials say the largest caliber was .47.

It is true, of course, that many guns were turned out for individuals, as well as for special presentations; and it is quite possible that there were wide caliber variations.

These Texas guns are interesting. They had folding triggers. No guards were provided. The barrels varied from 4½ to 12 inches.

Jack Three Fingers also had a Texas Colt. But it was somewhat different from the one owned by Murieta. It has a loading lever and a different type handle.

This pattern, I understand, was originally made without the loading lever, and was .31 caliber.

Murieta also owned and treasured a Colt repeating rifle, 8-shot, .36 caliber.

Murieta, whose range was from Sonora to San Francisco, became such a devastating menace that the entire State of California was in arms against him. He recruited savage killers from Mexico and turned them loose in California.

THE State Legislature passed special legislation to get rid of Murieta and Jack Three Fingers. Rewards were posted as high as $5,000. Murietta saw one and took a pencil and wrote on the placard:

"Not enough. I, Murieta, offer $10,000."

Then he set forth on his tour of carnage. He stole horses, drove off cattle. He robbed miners and held up pay-trains. But, over and above all, he kept alive his fierce hatred of all Americans.

Captain Harry Love was sent out to get him. Love followed him relentlessly. The captain was from Texas and he knew his business.

But Murieta wore a singular charm, He and Jack Three Fingers miraculously escaped death. Jack told the more gullible that the man who killed him would perish from a curse and many believed it.

Captain Love had no such misgivings. He kept after the killers. He had been told to stop them and he meant to do it. He came upon Murieta and his band and found them in camp.

Love, giving them a fair break, called on Murieta and his murderous tribe to surrender. They answered with gunfire.

Murieta, cut off from his weapons, jumped on a horse and dashed away. Love gave a sharp command.

Colt .45's and Winchester carbines roared. Murieta rode hard. His pursuers closed in on him. His horse fell dead. Murieta toppled to the ground. Love's men ran up ready to finish the killer.

But Murieta raised his hand. "No more," he said. "Your work is done." Then he fell dead at their feet.

Jack Three Fingers was also killed. But the people could not, or would not believe that these killers were dead. Captain Love had to prove it, and this he did by a very simple expedient. He cut off Murieta's head and the hand of Jack Three Fingers. These he presented to the authorities and to the populace.

Murieta's head was exhibited in San Francisco. Signs were posted reading:

"Joaquin Murieta's head may be seen at the corner of Hallack and Sansome Streets. Admission $1."

Men who had known Murieta certified to the genuineness of the exhibit. Among these were Ignacio Lizarraga and Father Dominic Blaive. Both knew the bandits by sight.

Later Murieta's head and the hand of Jack Three Fingers were exhibited in all sections of California. Hundreds flocked to see them.

But thousands of others refused to go near the place. They thought Jack Three Fingers had superhuman power. If they looked upon his maimed hand he might return to haunt and mutilate them.

But in any case, Californians breathed freely at last. The bloody reign of these heartless killers had been ended by the Colt.

SINCE we are discussing killers and the weapons they used, it is well at this point to consider the origin of the weapons. Instantly, we are confronted by the name of Colt.

Man, in his restless task of following the sun across the sky, has felt the need of adequate protection. This crying need, one Samuel Colt seems to have supplied in a manner that leaves little to be desired.

But who — and what — was this man Colt?

Samuel Colt, later known as Colonel Colt, was a seagoing youth. He whittled out his first model while he was on a sailing vessel bound for Calcutta.

The man was a practical dreamer. His dream ultimated in six pistols in one—the Colt!

Colt turned out his first revolvers at Paterson, N. J. This was in the early thirties. His first organization was known as the Patent Fire Arms Company. It struck financial shoals after two or three years. Then Colt moved to Hartford. There he founded the company which has remained in business to the present day.

Although other guns made their irregular appearance in the West, the name of Colt is inseparably bound up with cowboy and frontier life in America.

In the Southwest, where the cattle barons of the John Chisum and E. G. Murphy type reigned, the rule of the Colt was quickly established and long maintained. Six-gun rule was supreme.

It was the law of Dodge City in Bat Masterson's day. It was the final arbiter of Tombstone when Wyatt Earp and his brothers held sway in Arizona.

True, rifle and shotgun played their full part in the bitter and long-drawn feuds between cattlemen, sheepmen, but invariably the Colt was the last word in all disputes.

The Colt was the crisp answer to many moot questions. Men wore them and loved them. They oiled them and tinkered with them. They were as vital as life itself. They meant the delicate difference between life and death.

EVERY man had his own repair-shop. Strange things were done to some of the Colt six-guns. Blacksmiths, and others less gifted, were always working at them.

I have seen snub-nosed guns with their barrels sawed off until they were positively indecent. Little more than an inch remained. Most of these were .44's and .45's.

The short-barreled guns were great favorites for intimate work at close range. Almost without exception their triggers had been removed. These were for quick firing by thumb artists.

Al Jennings had one of these ugly little guns. It was a .45 without a trigger. Al used it for thumbing and fanning. It is said to have a sinister record.

Fanning, of course, was practiced—and is practiced—by those of nimble fingers and

quick wits. It is great in an emergency—if you know how! Fanning is flash business. It is no job for the amateur.

The gun must be specially treated. First of all the trigger is removed. In the actual operation of fanning, the revolver is held in one hand. The hammer is fanned by the other. Or, using one hand, the hammer is thumbed and the weapon fired in this manner.

A few of the old-line gunmen and killers are said to have wrought unbelievable havoc in this manner. Charlie Siringo told me of several he knew in Texas and Arizona. There was a one-eyed Mexican, named Felix, who had an uncanny knack at that sort of thing.

THERE has been a lot of misinformation about the initial guns used in the West. Perhaps the first Colt the Western frontier saw was the old cap and ball revolver.

This was before the advent of the metallic cartridge. These guns were both heavy and awkward. Many weighed four pounds or more.

Then came the lighter revolvers—about two pounds or less. Here originated the common practice of wearing a brace of six-guns.

This, in a manner, solved the problem of reloading. This was a serious question. Too, if was a safeguard against failure of a gun to fire. If one gun jammed, you had the other. Or, if swift, like Billy the Kid or Wild Bill Hickok, you could swing both with deadly effect.

Some of the more business-like killers laid in a supply of extra cylinders. In a pinch, they could keep up a pretty regular fire. Billy the Kid did this on many ticklish occasions.

Contrary to popular belief, there were not many Colt six-guns on the American frontier before our Civil War. Only a few of the emigrants who headed West during the gold rush had such weapons.

They had some revolvers, it is true, but these were old. Most of them were intricate pieces of foreign manufacture. Such men, as in the case of my grandfather, were more likely to have a good rifle.

Rifles were used for bagging game. They also came in handy when hostile Indians decided to do a little thieving. The Plains Rifle held a prominent place in the equipment of the earlier settlers and adventurers.

THE Colt Army Revolver was introduced, as the Model of 1847, in .44 caliber. About a thousand of these were made in Whitneyville, Conn. They were used by the Government and some came West with the riff-raff. As has been said, the largest caliber manufactured by Colt at the old plant in Paterson was .47.

The .44 we first knew was popularly known as the Walker. In actuality it was merely a copy. Colt made it from memory—using the old .47 he had made in Paterson. The Government took a number of these at $28 each.

The heavy Dragoon model, many of which are yet to be found on old ranches in the West, were turned out by Colt in 1848.

These heavy guns were for use on horseback. Some were fitted with shoulder stocks. Joaquin Murieta had one with a stock.

Outside of the .45, it is fair to assume that the .44 Colt was the next best bet, in the West. It was the constant companion of many a weary plodder.

The .44 was sometimes referred to as the principal revolver of the Civil War. This is erroneous.

The principal revolver of the war between the States was known as the Colt Army Revolver. Two hundred thousand of these were made in 1860. Hundreds of them were diverted to private use and scores came West with the settling of the open spaces.

THE celebrated cowboy and cavalry six-shooter was the old reliable .45. This was a good gun fifty years ago. It is a good gun today. I have one before me as I write. It is accurate and in first-class condition. They seem to last forever.

Although the one used by Billy the Kid has not been discharged in several decades, I have fired a number of them with safety and accuracy in recent years.

On the Flying W ranch, in Arizona, I have a friend who uses one regularly. I have seen him brush off a rattlesnake's head with the greatest ease.

Of equal popularity, in many sections, was the .44. Many cowboys preferred this model because it fired the cartridge of the Winchester rifle.

Western gamblers, on the other hand, had a decided preference for the .41. As a rule the more canny gamesters had special pockets built for these. Gamblers, in most cases, were not so keen for parading their artillery. They preferred to let the other fellow imagine they were not heeled.

It was a gambler's business to have a card up his sleeve. Your old-time gambler could be depended upon to bring into play at the proper moment his knife or a concealed derringer. Derringers were mighty popular among Western faro dealers and the herd of Mississippi River pirates who flocked West both before and after the gold rush.

The derringer, so-called, was first made by Henry Derringer of Philadelphia. This was about 1808. They found immediate favor because of their convenience.

It was no trick at all to hide them away. Sometimes a beaver hat would suffice. Some carried them up their sleves. Others, as in the case of Wild Bill Hickok, thrust them into the band of their trousers.

BILL HICKOK, in mowing down his thirty-eight men, made grim use of the derringer on more than one hectic occasion. Shortly after Wild Bill's untimely passing, in Deadwood, S. D., his derringer disappeared. For a number of years it was lost to the sight of man.

There was, in Montana, a prison warden who made up his mind that he was going to find this derringer. The warden kept up a ceaseless search. He came in contact with many hardened criminals of the West.

Finally he was tipped off by a convict. Soon he picked up the trail. At last he got possession of the weapon.

Then he made a special trip to California. Here he presented the derringer to Bill Hart. He wanted Hart, of all others, to have the weapon.

Unlike other derringers I have examined, Wild Bill's gun was quite plain. Some are handsomely carved and plated with silver or gold. Bill's seems to have been nickeled.

Wild Bill had many guns. One, in particular, was artistically engraved and deeply inlaid. Done in pearl was the bust of a man—some prominent figure of the day—but I was unable to make out who it was.

It was the custom, on jobs of this kind, to inlay the heads of statesmen or other favorites. One Colt I examined—in the Arizona collection of L. G. Thornton—had a bust of Abraham Lincoln. The stock was a beautiful piece of the original Charter Oak.

Killers coveted such guns. Often they killed for them. Quite as often they were killed—for the same reason.

ONE of the most vicious-looking weapons I have encountered was a battered .45. It had an impressive record and came from Bat Masterson's old stamping-grounds in Dodge City.

This gun has wooden handles—and eight notches.

"And those notches prove," Bill Hart said to me, "that the hombre who packed this gun was a low-down thieving murderer. Not many others notched their hog-legs like that."

I asked an executive of the Colt company about this and he told me that even he had seen but one or two guns so notched.

One of these which came in from South America was all cut up. It is believed to have belonged to a member of the Butch Cassidy gang. Cassidy, of course, fled to Argentine after they made it too hot for him and his killers in the states. He had a number of fine guns and an assortment of small derringers and his gang is said to have slaughtered more than forty-five men, many of them peace officers.

This Cassidy, while not killing so many personally, seems to have been a great hand to flog his victims with a revolver. He "pistol-whupped" them.

In this connection, it is wise to bear in mind that a man is seldom whipped with the butt of a gun. This happens in fiction. It wasn't done on the range.

The reason is not far to seek. Just try turning a gun around and you will have the answer. When you reverse the weapon you place in the hands of your foe a very practical method of bringing about your own death.

The Western gunmen could tell you: "If

you've got a yen to larrup a man with your six-gun—remember to lambast him with the barrel. Keep hold of the butt! Otherwise, he may have the brains to press the trigger. Then you'll have a date with the undertaker."

FAVORITE guns with express messengers and stage-drivers were shot-guns and the so-called Belt Model revolver. The Colt Belt Model was made in 1848. Many a rough customer turned up his toes when the Belt Model began belching.

These were manufacturerd by Colt in the old three-story plant on Pearl Street, Hartford. They were made in 3, 4, 5 and 6-inch lengths of barrel. The guns were .31 caliber and there was no loading lever. Earl Reed has one of them. It was taken from the slug-laden body of a killer in Wyoming.

Then, too, I have seen in the West some scarred specimens of the Colt New Model Belt gun, .36 caliber, brought out about 1862. These were transformed in 1870 for metallic ammunition.

Among the guns owned by my friend Thornton is a rifle or two which belonged to the unruly Geronimo. At famous old Fort Huachuca—where Jack Pershing was once a lieutenant of cavalry—an Apache scout showed me another rifle owned by Geronimo. The wooden stock of this rifle was fantastically studded with brass tacks and other gee-gaws. Bits of glass and peculiar-looking beads had been driven into it.

Ornamentation was a fetish with the Indian. Nearly every rifle and six-gun owned by an Indian was desecrated in this crude manner.

Siringo and other old scouts tell me that the Indian was a very poor shot. They made a lot of noise with a rifle but they were terrible with a revolver.

I questioned the Apache scout at Huachuca about this and he shook his head and mumbled. Then he pointed to a bow and arrow.

"Him, good shot," he mumbled, and stretched his arms. Then he squinted and clapped and his hands.

The inference was plain. He meant that the tribesman was far more at home with his own weapons and no doubt he was right.

Rifle and revolver gripped his imagination. But he was not so cunning in their operation. The white man, if he could shoot at all, knew how to place his shots. The Indian scattered his fire and took it out in yelling. I have no doubt there were exceptions. But the average red man was a duffer with his white brother's weapons.

JUST what became of all of Wyatt Earp's guns I do not know. I had been told that Bill Hart had some but I was disappointed to learn this was not true.

Bill explained this with a rueful smile.

"You don't feel any worse than I do. I thought once that I had one of Wyatt Earp's guns and I kept it some time. At last, when I had a good chance, I showed it to Earp. I said: "That was your gun, wasn't it?"

He took one look at it. Then he scowled. He said: 'No, Bill. That gun never belonged to me. I wouldn't have it.'

"I asked him why. He said: 'Bill I wouldn't own a gun without a wooden handle.' "

This business of handles was a ticklish problem. Siringo told me that the old-time killers had strong likes and dislikes. He said they reminded him of soubrettes. They were very particular about their handles. Some were keen for rubber. Others hated it. Some would have nothing but bone. Others had a childish yearning for pearl and ivory. These might be plain or elaborately carved. Mexican killers were strong for these. Jack Three Fingers adored them. Villa had a weakness for them.

But men like Wyatt Earp wanted wood —and no monkey-business about it. They didn't even want the wood checked. Billy the Kid's gun-handle was smooth and unmarred.

It seems wooden handles have always been popular. This is due, no doubt, to their durability and firm grip.

In the Seventies vulcanized rubber handles were adapted. For a time they had a certain following. But now the taste has swung back to wood—mostly checked. Western sheriffs and their deputies use these. They seem to feel safer with them. No doubt Wyatt Earp and other old-time marshals and killers felt the same way about it.

SOME of the most weird killer guns I have ever seen were in possession of Harry Anderson of Kansas City.

One owned by Anderson is a Sharp's four-barrel pistol. It is a snub-nosed contraption with a firing pin that revolves each time the hammer is cocked.

Anderson got it in Sonora and it has notches on the stock. This gun is said to have belonged to a killer named Valdez. There was a name on the strap which I could not make out.

In the Anderson collection were several guns which were a part of the consignment ordered in Europe by Abraham Lincoln. These, which included the tit-cartridge type, came West after the Government released them in the Sixties.

This collection has one very interesting gun. It is a handsomely engraved Dragoon Colt with a rear sight. This is said to have been picked up after the Battle of Bull Run. It fell into the hands of a gambler. He was killed. Then the Dragoon was claimed by a bartender in Dodge City.

The bartender was killed by a bad man. The killer later used and notched the gun. One of Dodge City's earlier peace officers ended the career of the killer and confiscated his gun. Eventually it fell into the hands of Anderson. Guns of this particular type are very rare.

Anderson also showed me a Remington pocket magazine pistol and a Savage navy revolver. The Savage has a ring trigger for cocking the hammer and revolving the cylinder. The Remington is nickel-plated and has hardwood handles. The cartridges are brought from the magazine to the barrel by means of drawing back the hammer.

These weapons, as well as a Remington .44 in Anderson's collection, had seen grim service around Dodge City and in the bad lands of Indian Territory.

There is, in the Anderson group, a .38 Colt Belt type alteration. This gun is interesting because of its several peculiarities. The recoil block has no gate.

Anderson told me the gun was picked up by his grandfather somewhere in Texas. Apparently it belonged to a period just before the straight cartridge revolvers came into use.

This gun has a sensitive trigger and delicate filigree work. There are some notches and a crude name on the butt. Just what Texas killer used it we can only surmise. I tried but failed to decipher the name.

THUS far we have been discussing the revolvers of the killers and others.

But it must not be taken for granted that the only weapon the killer used was a revolver. Other weapons played a leading part in the glamorous days of the old West.

There was, for example, the lowly shotgun. If you think the killers scorned this you are badly mistaken. They used them to advantage.

Wyatt Earp, a man with a deadly trigger finger, was not above bringing to play the prosaic shotgun. Earp walked into one of his most terrific scrimmages clutching a shotgun. This was when he clashed with the Clantons and their cohorts in Tombstone.* When that shotgun quit belching the Arizona terrain was plentifully dotted with enemy dead.

Some sneer at the unassuming shotgun, but the fact remains that frontier life and shotguns are as closely related as father and son. Double-barreled shotguns of the 10-bore variety were used by cattlemen and express messengers alike.

They figured prominently in pitched battles between cowmen and sheepmen. Many helpless herders were stopped by heavy slugs from shotguns. Shotgun vengeance was less decorus but it was equally as significant as Colt vengeance.

While Colt played an overshadowing part in the taming of the West, it is just as well to remember that other revolvers came West with the roving bands.

There are quite a few of these still scattered on ranches from the Kaw River to the Pacific Slope. Included in the list are the Kennedy, the Remington, the Starr and a few others. Some of these are good

**Editor's Note*—Some authorities aver that Doc Holliday was the only man who used a shotgun in the showdown battle between the Earps and the Clantons at Tombstone. Contradictions of this sort are bound to creep into the history of the West's famous gun feuds—for most of the principals are dead, the memories of first-hand witnesses are often unreliable after the intervening years, and in the smoke of battle the swift moves of the killers could not have been followed by the keenest observer.

weapons. A few were very exceptional.

Charlie Siringo showed me a rare revolver. He smiled whimsically as he said it belonged to a fellow who went to the draw once too often. Charlie never spoke of killing a man. He just said, "I knocked the feller over—but I had to do it."

This unusual gun was signed by L. W. Pond of Massachusetts. It was rim-fire, 6 shot, .31 caliber. It had a hinged barrel and the forward part of the frame opened upward.

Charlie wasn't positive, but he thought this was brought out for Smith & Wesson, about 1860. Charlie got it somewhere in the Southwest. I should like to know the story but it isn't polite to press questions like that.

Siringo also showed me a Colt revolver with an extension stock. This could be fired from the shoulder, like a carbine. He rode hundreds of miles in strange country. This was his "hoss" gun.

The Colt was badly battered. Part of the stock had been chipped away. A bullet had passed that way. I wondered who fired that shot—and what happened to him. Nothing much, perhaps—except burial. No doubt he slumbers now beneath the chaparal.

One of the most singular guns shown me by Siringo was a little five-shot pepperbox. It was made in Windsor, Vermont, and was taken from a plug-ugly in the Texas Panhandle.

There were two openings in the frame. These give a full view of the hammer to show which barrel will be the next to fire.

The gun had hardwood handles and a ring trigger. It had brass sights. I am in doubt about the caliber; possibly between .32 and .38.

WHEN we trace the evolution of the revolver, we are confronted by some interesting facts.

The first revolver, fired with a percussion-cap, was made with the whole of the barrels—5, 6, 7 or 8—revolving in one piece. This we know as the pepper-box.

It was single action. That is, the hammer was raised and the barrel revolved by a pull on the trigger. These were hard to aim. This was because of the resistance of the mainspring.

The principle of the revolving breech, which superseded the pepper-box, is an old one. It dates back to the time of Charles I. It is said that Samuel Colt got his first idea from an old model in the Tower of London.

It was the invention of the copper cap that made the new revolvers wholly possible. The old priming system was an awful ordeal. Proper ignition was virtually impossible.

The double action revolver was, of course, a great advance over the single action. It enabled the first and the successive shots to be accurately fired.

As rim-fire, pin-fire and central-fire cartridges were successively introduced, breech-loading revolvers were constructed to use them. Pin-fire cartridges, both paper and metallic, were extensively used on the Continent of Europe. They were utilized for Lefaucheux and other revolvers. Rim-fire cartridges are still used for some revolvers of small caliber.

HOLSTERS, which held a prominent place in the mechanism of the quick-draw, were selected with the greatest care by Billy the Kid and other noted killers.

L. G. Thornton has a wicker basket full of these. Some are worn slick. On a few the trigger guard has been cut away. Others have a hole through the end. These things were done to facilitate firing.

Some have buckskin thongs for tying them down to the thighs. Others swing freely from the belt.

One belt I saw had the buckle shot away. Another, belonging to Murieta, held some of the tarnished cartridges which were in its pockets at the time when Murieta was cut down.

In Oklahoma I held a belt worn by Al Jennings. In Durango there may be found a pair of belts worn by the atrocious Jarauta. It was from this savage that Jack Three Fingers learned many of his vicious tricks. There is also a knife and one of his rifles.

Just what disposition has been made of all the killer guns of the West none can say. Some were buried. Others were destroyed. Still others, as was the custom, were stolen. A few are scattered in museums in America and abroad.

Here and there, in private collections, we find a few that are properly authenti-

cated. Who has the shotgun that Wyatt Earp used to clean up Tombstone? What became of all the countless other guns, including the ivory-handled .44's of Wild Bill Hickok, and the death-dealing six-guns of Dave Matherson and Bat Masterson?

It would be interesting to examine again these gruesome relics of Colt rule when the West was but a wilderness.

Killer guns and killers! What havoc they wrought in the days of the West that are gone.

## HOLE-IN-THE-WALL HERO

COLONEL GEORGE R. SHANTON, one-time cowboy, who lived until a few years ago, had an adventurous career equaled in picturesque romance by but few men of the present generation. One of the most colorful feathers in his cap of fame was his victory over Butch Cassidy's notorious "Hole-in-the-Wall" gang.

His father was a pioneer railroad builder, and George was brought up in the old West, in the days of Indians, cowboys, cattle rustlers and general turmoil. At the age of six years George was stolen by Indians encamped on the banks of the Kaw River in Kansas. Before he was recovered by his parents he had gained an intimate knowledge of the life in an Indian village of the '70s.

In the Omaha of 1877 the boy's daily associations were with Indian scouts, buffalo hunters and plainsmen. From the windows of the first Union Pacific trains he saw antelope, cowboys, Indians and cattle.

In 1881 he went to Fort Laramie, Wyo., then an important army post. He earned his first money there on a newspaper delivery route which he covered on an Indian pony. His first steady job was herding cattle and watching the hillsides for smoke signals of raiding Indians. He learned to rope and ride wild two-year-old broncos, to chase coyotes and to reach from the saddle and pull badgers from their holes.

For a time he held a job as foreman on an Englishman's ranch, teaching the younger sons of the English nobleman to ride, rope steers and hunt. There were wild days when gangs of cowboys exuberantly shot up the little towns along the Union Pacific after seeing their cattle safely shipped eastward.

Young George aided vigilantes in hunting down and hanging cattle thieves and learned to draw and fan a six-shooter with the best of them.

When the Spanish-American War came in 1898, Shanton was chosen captain of Troop C, First Volunteer Cavalry, as Roosevelt's Rough Riders were known officially. He later organized the Cuban constabulary and helped suppress guerrilla warfare on the island.

**THE REAL WILD WEST**

**Cowboys — Bucking Broncs — Wild and Wooly**

Big fine etchings, hand colored—made by the greatest real cowboy artist—LAS VEGAS KIM. A five dollar etching postpaid for only $1. Three $5 etchings for $2.50. All postpaid.

**TEXON STUDIO . TEXON, TEXAS**

**BIG MONEY IN AVIATION**

Become an Aircraft Instrument Technician. Complete training qualifies YOU for big paying job. Very liberal payment plan. Write for details to

**Box No. 8, Hillcrest Station, San Diego, Calif.**

# Death Rides to Tombstone

By JOHN STARR

**Keep watch Geronimo and your blood-smeared braves! Move swiftly you Billy the Kid and your powder-breed, for a stranger has crossed the red Arizona hills —a greenhorn, with the friendly smile of a cherub, and Hell's own Colt-skill!**

***A Novel of Apache Days***

ON the morning of April 13, 1878, the day that was his twenty-first birthday, Phillip Wallis knew that the mystery of his upbringing would be explained. It was the day on which that strange and forbidding man, his grandfather, had promised to tell him why he had been brought up differently and apart from the boys in the neighboring Housatonic Valley farms.

He dressed quickly and performed the usual farm duties. There was no very pleasant expression on the boy's face. He thought over the bitter things he was to say to the old man. During his starved and dreary hours he had rehearsed them often. Sometimes he had almost dared to tell the grim-faced old man how he rebelled at his lot. When he was sixteen he had run away over the State line into New York. He remembered vividly his

flight and the pursuit by the old man and the fearful beating he had received.

Again and again since that time Phillip had pondered over what his grandfather's words meant as they rode back to the lonely farm. "You are being prepared for a great enterprise. No wish of yours shall stand against it. Until you are twenty-one you are subject to my orders. After that you can choose for yourself. When that day comes, I shall tell you everything."

The day had come. Phillip Wallis was his own master. His small grip was already packed. This breakfast was the last meal he would eat in the bleak farmhouse set in unfertile fields. Those dreams of physical vengeance, of paying back with interest the beatings he had endured at his grandfather's hands, had been abandoned of late. Not that he loved the old man more. Rather it was because he was conscious of his own great strength. At sixteen, Stephen Wallis had mastered him easily. At one and twenty the positions were reversed.

It was the old man's custom on rising, to walk from the farm to a little mound which commanded a wide view of the bleak, rock-strewn lands around him, and gaze westward for several minutes. On this particular morning it seemed to the impatient boy that his grandfather took longer than usual.

At seventy years old Stephen Wallis was still erect. He was a tall, spare, bearded man, whose bronzed face was seamed with unnumbered wrinkles. While still standing on the mound he turned his head and looked toward the boy. "Come here," he called.

The instinct of obedience was still strong and Phillip started to move toward the old man. Then he stopped short. He was his own master now. The old life was over. In the end he decided to go. He was yet to learn the mystery that surrounded him.

"I am looking," said the old man, "at two graves."

"Graves?" said Phillip, "I don't see any."

"They are three thousand miles away."

Slowly the two walked back to the house. Just inside the bare living-room Phillip's grip stood. He had placed it there as a symbol of his revolt. It was an intimation to the tyrant that the time had come for parting. Stephen Wallis looked at it a moment.

"You are going?" he queried.

"Yes."

"Where and when?"

"To New York sometime this morning."

"And what are you going to do there?"

"Anything," said the boy a little wildly, "anything to get away from this. Anything to meet people and have friends. You can't stop me now."

The old man looked at him in so strange a manner that Phillip grew uneasy. It seemed to him that behind this look was the absolute certainty that the elder would triumph.

"In one way you are right," Stephen Wallis answered. "You are your own master legally. Also you are too big and strong to be held back by me now. Yet I do not think you will go to New York.

"What will stop me?" the boy asked.

"Duty."

"To you?" He laughed, "I guess not; I've been treated like a dog."

"I did not speak of your duty to me. I was thinking of what you owed to those two graves three thousand miles away, Phillip." There was something very impressive in the old man's manner now, "I stood by those graves almost twenty years ago and took an oath that every man who was guilty of that murder should perish violently."

"Who had been murdered?" the boy asked, falteringly. He knew he was now close to the heart of the mystery.

"Your mother and your father. They killed my only son foully. The manner of your mother's death was even more terrible."

There was something very terrible in the old man's aspect as he said this. It had been told Phillip that his grandfather was a madman. As the boy looked he saw the fanatic light in the other's eyes. When it died down the old man smiled kindly. So far as he remembered it, this was the first time that he had ever received so pleasant a look. Stephen Wallis put his hand on the other's shoulder.

"Boy, let us have breakfast together," he said. "When it is over I will tell you the story you must hear.

## II

DURING the silent meal the boy's thoughts were confused with the information he had heard. Once or twice, years before, he had spoken of his parents. He had asked, timidly, when they had died, and where. He had been sternly rebuked and told that in due time he would be told. He had grown up to believe—as the people he met in the village had hinted—that there was something disgraceful about them.

He had been specially trained. At what? How did his training differ from those of other farmers' sons in this western boundary of Connecticut? Suddenly it came to him why he had been allowed to ride constantly and to shoot. Now he knew why the stern old man who frowned upon boys' games permitted him to have a rifle and revolver and saw to it that he shot well. He recalled how in every phase of his physical life, he had been trained to unusual strength, activity and endurance.

The result of these activities had been to make Phillip Wallis at twenty-one, speedy of foot, a skilled horseman and a splendid shot. He had endurance and courage. What neighbors had called a wasted boyhood had in reality been a training for something grimmer and more deadly than they had a notion of.

"What do people think of this farm?" Stephen Wallis asked when his breakfast was over.

"They think it the poorest farm in the county. All rocks and sour soil."

"It is because of that I bought it. You have thought of me as a poor man. Phillip, I could have bought an estate and brought you up in luxury if I had wanted to. You could have ridden gaited saddle horses and gone, as I did, to Yale. Preparation like that would not have made the man I need. I bought these four hundred acres because it is the nearest approach I know in the East to the country I am sending you to. I have steeled you to poor food and irregular meals because that is what you may expect. I have made you as good a horseman as those you will meet and a better shot than most. I have made whipcord muscles of your big bones. You have the quickness of the mountain lion. Phillip, you have exceeded my expectations."

The boy flushed a little. This was the first time he had ever received praise. "It would have helped me more if you had told it to me earlier," he said.

"It would have made it too hard for me in the end if I had allowed myself to grow fond of you. I might have forgotten my oath, the oath I took to avenge them. I have closed my heart to affection. It would have been very easy to grow too fond of you."

"So you've let me grow up to hate you," the boy flashed. He saw the old man wince.

"There's no sense in it," said the boy sullenly. "Why couldn't I have been brought up like others? If you're my grandfather and I'm your grandson why should we not even be friends?"

"Because if we were I could not let you go. After you leave here I shall see you no more."

"Why not?"

"Because I am sending you to your death."

"You seem very certain I shall go."

"It is for you to make the choice. If you refuse, my son, your father, goes unavenged. What I could do, I did, but it was not enough. I dare not go back to the West. I am a marked man even after twenty years of absence. When you enter the Territory—"

"What Territory?" the other demanded.

"The Territory of Arizona. You will find that what I did is not forgotten. You will go there as an emigrant from the East bearing a name not known. You will be unsuspected. In Arizona, New Mexico and California none will expect you to be able to ride, to do those things I have taught you. They will make game of you and think to find an easy victim. This will be your hardest burden. You must let them think so. Your skill as a shot, your swiftness of foot, your horsemanship and your ability to wrestle and fight and follow a trail must not be known."

"But why?"

"So that you will be unsuspected. The mining camps where you will go contain the scum of the earth. Life is cheap. Among these are bullies and the bullied,

those who look any man in the eye unafraid and those whose eyes sink beneath such a gaze. Phillip, you will be of this latter kind. You will seek no quarrel. You will back down. They may even sneer at you for a coward. It will be hard work. But remember in those moments that you are doing it for one end. Remember that when you have finished, men in these very camps will speak underbreath of the unknown who takes swift and dreadful vengeance." Again Phillip saw the fanatic in Stephen Wallis' eyes. "It will be of you they are talking, you they have despised and therefore not suspected."

"But you forget I don't know what I am to do, or whether I shall accept." In the boy's mind there was growing the belief that it was with a madman he talked. Stories reached the East of the strange lawlessness of the far Territories of New Mexico and Arizona where strong men ruled, and Apaches killed ambushed travelers, and bandits from Old Mexico roamed the country slaying and holding to ransom.

It was a life such as made strong appeals to the adventurous, but it had seemed too far away from his own career to give it a thought. And now he had found he had been trained to go among these very desperadoes, and conquer them at their own games.

Phillip Wallis never forgot his grandfather's talk. There in the big, low-ceilinged kitchen with the breakfast dishes still on the table he learned where he was born and the tragic fate of his parents.

"I went to Arizona," his grandfather began, "when your grandmother died and your father was a little boy. Against advice I took him with me. He was all I had and I loved him. We went by stage from St. Louis to San Francisco, 2,760 miles on a twenty-five-day schedule with 2,000 miles in hostile Indian country. Magnus Colorado with a hundred Apaches held us up at Stein's Pass. Your father and I alone escaped. From the first it seemed he had a charmed life. I had a mine at Hassayampa, twelve miles from Prescott, and did very well with it. I sent your father to California to be educated. You were born there."

"In California?"

"Yes, at San Diego. He joined me when he was about your age. You are like him in figure but I am glad you are dark and not fair as he was."

"Why?"

"So that they will not see the likeness, and call to mind my son, and so escape from his son. Your father married a girl of a California-Spanish family, the Camarillos. She was a great beauty. It was a runaway match, and I was angry at it as were the Camarillos. It is usually well to keep to one's own blood and faith, but she won me with her charm and kindness. There was not much law or order in the Territory in those days, even less than now, and the Camarillos had political influence in some way. Your father thought it better that they should not come to Prescott where I was known until the search of the Camarillos had died down. They had found—or pretended to—some irregularity in the form of marriage and wanted to take her back to California. While agents watched my home in Prescott my son and his wife were staking out a claim a hundred miles away in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

"They had stumbled on a rich lode when they had only in reality wished to keep out of the way until my lawyers had cleared their tangle. What old miners had been looking a lifetime for they had found. On my advice they had taken other names than their own. Apparently they were friendless. One black night twenty men jumped the claim. Your father knew at a glance what manner of men they were and he fought as long as he could with the hope that your beautiful young mother could escape a worse fate than his. You were a year old and heavy. If she had abandoned you she might have had a chance for her life. It was on your account, therefore, that she went slowly. They overtook her; thought she was a poor Mexican girl without influence or money. The history of that range is written in blood. This was another chapter. I found you among Indians, for there were good Apaches as well as bad, just as there were decent men in mining camps, as well as those fiends who killed your parents.

"There were twenty men in that group. Your eyes, I am looking into now must have seen every one of them. The clothes you wore when I found you were stained

with blood. Blood she shed for you. What I did to avenge them you may learn later but it was not enough. I have waited twenty years to ask you this question. Shall the men who did murder that night sleep securely because the little child they tore from its mother's arms has become too cowardly a man to avenge her?"

The grandfather did not immediately press him for an answer. He kept his keen eyes on the youngster's face. He was to know within a few seconds, whether the sacrifices he had made to this one end, had been in vain or not. The sacrifice had been greater than the boy could understand. He had denied himself the confidence and affection of his only living relative. Had he been willing to forget those two graves in the Santa Catalina mountains he could have lived in luxurious surroundings, resumed old friendships and been adored by the boy.

"You say you know the names of all the men implicated?" Phillip's voice was harder now. There was hot purpose in it.

"I know their names. I have every particular about them you need. Ten are left. Some occupy high positions. Some have sunk almost below human level. All are equally guilty. All ten of them should have been strung to a live oak years ago. Remember always that they robbed you of your father and mother. It is owing to them you are without friends, embittered and lonely, hating your only relative."

Phillip Wallis looked across the table at the old man and saw him in a new light. The white-haired man with the keen eyes and the dominant, aggressive nose, was more than an exacting tyrant to him now. Instead of the driver, who had forced him to hard work and the endurance of fatigue, Phillip saw one whose every move had been dictated by a solemn purpose, the avenging of a great wrong. In that moment the younger man wiped from his mind the grudge he had held. He was a man in mind now, as well as in legal years. His lean, tanned face broke into a swift-passing smile.

"I don't hate you now," he said slowly, "I see clearly that it wasn't your fault. It was their fault." A flash of anger shone in his brown eyes as he said it, "and they shall pay."

It seemed to the lad there was something almost apologetic in the elder's tones.

"I had to bring you up in this lonely way," he said. "If I had sent you to school instead of teaching you myself, there would have been friendships to interfere and perhaps a girl to hold you back when I most needed you. That was the thing of which I was most afraid."

"Women don't like me," the other answered.

"Women will like you," his grandfather returned. "There will be no escape from that." He sighed a little, "but I am glad you do not hate me. I have not been lenient and I have not spared you, but I have tried to be just. If you cherish hard thoughts of me remember I, too, have lived this hard life when I could as easily lived in comfort and luxury."

It was true. Stephen Wallis and his grandson had done all the work of the upland farm through many hot summers and bitter winters. And to find out that the old man was wealthy, and might have lived differently was staggering. A thought occurred to Phillip, which at first he hardly wished to voice since it reflected in a manner on the courage of the old man.

"Why didn't you go down there instead of waiting all these years for me to grow up?"

"Because I am a marked man in the two territories of New Mexico and Arizona. Before you go you shall know everything. In that band of claim jumpers and killers were those who had political influence. Notably there was the man you will hear of as Wild Pat Cassity. I killed him, Phillip. He was the first to go. I was well known wherever miners met. There was a reward on my head. I stayed long enough to make them shudder and speak in whispers when my name was mentioned. I cannot disguise my way of speech, my carriage or my features." He looked at the boy as though he suddenly remembered no promise had been given that he would take up the vendetta. "You have decided?"

"I shall go," said Phillip.

The old man sighed a little. It was as though he had been under a tremendous strain. He held out his hand, and the two looked into one another's eyes for the first time, with something of affection and understanding.

"Henceforth," said Stephen Wallis, "we talk as equals."

## III

"THE men who had reason to fear me believe I am dead," said Stephen Wallis, "because it is known that I was with the pack train that Geronimo destroyed in the Sierra de Sahuaripa range near Casa Grande in Old Mexico. I was with them but I escaped and was rescued by Mexican troops near Casita. You will find down there that between Geronimo and the Mexicans, is a hatred far more bitter than between the Apaches and our own people. The Mexican troops killed his wife, mother and three little children and he never lost an opportunity to kill one of them when he could not kill two. In a way this helped me for the Mexicans were friendly toward anyone whom the Apache war chief injured."

Phillip Wallis knew now why it was he had heard of Indians and their method of warfare so often. He learned why it was he had been taught to follow the trails of horses, cattle and wild animals until the tracks they left were plain to his eyes but invisible to those of the untrained.

"Fortunately," the old man went on, "you were with a Mexican family in Sonora. I say fortunately, because Cassity's friends were not satisfied that I was dead. I had been too dangerous. They knew nothing of your existence, but if I had been compelled to go back to Arizona to fetch you, they would have known of me."

"And traced you back here?" Phillip demanded eagerly.

"No. Here they and theirs have no power. They could not have harmed me or you. I am glad, because they have no idea that anyone still remembers their crime. They will not be forearmed. It is forgotten in the memory of others. You will be known as an emigrant from the East, skilled in nothing. You will not attract attention. You will not boast or quarrel. You will be one of a surging throng maddened by the craze for gold. Often when you may feel insulted by men you could whip, you will draw back telling yourself that you are engaged on a sacred mission and are not free to indulge in private quarrels. Of the ten men you must punish, three are now rich and honored."

The threat of punishment brought the younger man to a sudden realization that the law might make no difference between such revenge as his grandfather outlined and plain, everyday murder. Despite the hot blood that was in his veins, Phillip Wallis had not the instincts of a killer in cold blood.

"What do you mean by punishment?" he demanded.

"Exacting the uttermost penalty. When I fled into Mexico nineteen years ago and brought you back, I thought only death could satisfy me. But there are better ways than that. Death is too quickly done. Life is the long punishment. Life with money lost, friends alienated and hope gone. That is what you must bring about. You will have time. None are old men. The man they call Big Kenner is just fifty and he was the eldest of that ravening band."

"How can I do anything, if I have to work for a living all the time?"

"Your work will be to avenge your father. What money you need will be supplied. Three agents, one in Tucson, one in Santa Fé, and the other in San Diego, will honor whatever demands you may make on them. It is your money, Phillip, your own money, so never hesitate to use it for what you may need. I do not want it known that you have these sources of supply but it may be necessary to accomplish a certain end, that you appear as an Eastern capitalist. Each of my agents will have fifty thousand dollars for you. If that comes to an end let me know."

One hundred and fifty thousand dollars to a boy who had never a dollar to spend on himself in his life! Suddenly the idea came to him that the very association which the name Wallis might bring would remind those he had come to harm.

"Ought I to take another name?" he demanded.

"You have already," said his grandfather. "You will hear a great deal in the West of one they call 'Doc' Sillaw. Some will say he was an outlaw. Others will call him a madman. His name will never be forgotten on account of the Sillaw Lode, in the Dragoon Mountains. Most

believe that one of Geronimo's warriors took his scalp in the Sierra de Sahuaripa range. You are looking at him now. The name Wallis is simply my own name, and yours, spelled backward. I tell you this. If that band had had any idea the simple prospector was a Sillaw when they killed your father they would not have done it. Our name meant something in those days, and you have seen how I shoot. No, it was a tragedy that they believed him to be a nameless, penniless man with a Mexican girl for "wife." The old man's face grew hard and there was that eagle flash of the eye. "They thought his death would attract no more notice than any Mexican at their period. They wanted his claim and he stood in the way."

"Who has the claim now?"

"It was a 'stringer'—that is a small vein and pinched out a few feet below the surface. They had done murder for ore that was not worth a thousand dollars. You will be known by the name of Wallis. If necessary you will become a stockman. You have a definite object in view and you may choose your own way to attain it. You will take no letters or memoranda with you, because they may be stolen. What I shall tell you before you go must be printed indelibly on your brain. You have a trained memory and it will not be hard. I will repeat ten names. After that I will take up each one and tell you his life history as far as I have been able to find it up to within a year or so. I have an agent in New York who keeps me informed as far as he is able to. Write the names down. That will impress it better on your memory."

Phillip put the ten names on a tablet, names that were soon to be carved deeply on his brain, so deeply that they would never be forgotten while life lasted.

*William F. Kenner (Big Kenner).*
*James Steen (Faro Jim Steen).*
*George Maxwell (Scotty Maxwell).*
*Harry Chapin (Three-Fingered Harry).*
*Edward Hawes (Shorty).*
*Charles Dunham (One-Eye Dunham).*
*Herman Bauer (the Big Dutchman).*
*Juan Ensenada.*
*Pedro Pimeria.*
*Romo Clementez.*

"The three last," said Stephen Wallis, "were all hangers-on of the dance halls and gambling hells. They were not the leaders. I was told they were taken, so that if any trouble developed the crime and claim jumping could be ascribed to Mexicans. Of course, they were flattered at being allowed to ride with such great names, to them, as Kenner, Bauer and Dunham. Those are the three ring-leaders and, as you will hear, all are now in such positions of importance as to make it very difficult to harm them. You may hear from the old-timers, even as I heard it, the story of Joaquin Murieta, the greatest of all the Mexican bandits who harried California in the early fifties. He killed a thousand men to avenge his brother before Captain Love's men shot him in the Salinas Plains, near Pas Robles. I do not think that could happen now, although there is mention in the papers of a bandit they call, 'Billy the Kid.' Your method will be subtler and more terrible because you are educated and have a definite mission."

"Yet you do not think I shall come back."

"I am afraid not." The old man spoke deliberately. "The odds against you will be very great. The three I called the ring-leaders, Bauer, Dunham and Kenner, are all politically powerful in their counties and have at their beck and call men who will do murder at a nod. There are law and order societies and vigilantes here and there, but the Territories are vast." He paused a moment. "Sometimes I wonder if I have done right in dedicating you to much a mission." The old man put a hand to his head with a weary gesture. "And when I think of my boy, your father, and his wife, the daughter of an aristocratic family of Spanish California, done to death foully by such as Bauer, I feel that we Sillaws will do what the law refused to do."

"I shall not turn back," said the younger. "Tell me about this Herman Bauer."

"He came from Utah in a prairie schooner with his parents. They were going to the California placer fields. A hundred of these covered wagons started from Salt Lake. Only one of them got safely through Death Valley. Bauer's family perished. He was a strapping lad then, and the spectacle of men and women dropping dead from starvation on that awful

journey drove him almost insane. That is his story. He arrived with the wagon belonging to another man, whose life blood stained its interior. There seems no doubt but that Bauer, finding this man's horses alone likely to survive, killed him. The news filtered through some time later. There was a man who had been left behind at Furnace Creek Canyon, who met Bauer later in San Jose, where he had a dance hall, and denounced him. Bauer shot him dead to avenge what he called his honor. You see that Bauer made his debut here in blood. He has lived by violence and terrorism."

"Where shall I find him?"

"In Tombstone, Arizona. He had to leave California. He has a big dance hall now and is reputed to be wealthy. If it should happen that you can punish only one of the seven—I am counting the Mexicans out, for they were not leaders—let Herman Bauer be the man."

Phillip Wallis nodded and looked at his notes.

"Bill Kenner comes next," he said quietly.

"He's a cattle rustler on such a wholesale scale that he seems above the law. I have spoken to you of Arizona because I do not want to confuse you. Actually, what is now Arizona was in my day only a county of New Mexico. Think of a county as big as New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland! Then picture it as the home of Apaches ambushing every small group of whites. Into this gigantic county poured outlaws from California, Texas, Nevada and Old Mexico. How could the small forces of the law deal with such men in such a place? Before the Civil War there were Government troops for keeping the Indians under, but they were withdrawn later, and for several years they could not be called upon. Men like Kenner took advantage of these conditions. It was not healthy to speak against Kenner or Bauer or Dunham, even if they were a hundred miles distant.

"Some ambitious desperado, anxious to make good with these powers, or to satisfy suspicion as to his loyalty, would take up the quarrel. That was why I found it so difficult. I was widely known. Men knew I had sworn to avenge your father. When I came, Kenner and Dunham fled. Bauer took refuge in Santa Fé under another name." The old man paused a moment, and Phillip found himself eager to start.

If his grandfather had been the taskmaster before, he fulfilled his promise to treat him now as an equal. The lad felt as though he had to deal with another man. There was something flattering in it because he had long admired this tall, stern man whose physical courage and mental abilities he had seen through many years.

"One-Eye Dunham," said Stephen Wallis, "is no less dangerous than the others. The lode in your father's mine, the lode that pinched out, was located by Dunham not far away. Some geological upthrust had displaced it innumerable ages ago. He is now one of the wealthiest men in the Territory, and, like Kenner, does not care to leave it, because California wants him for murder and he cannot be certain of protection there. A blast of powder put his eye out and blackened one side of his face. Some newcomers have sometimes been misguided enough to laugh at his queer face. Generally, it has been their last laugh in this world. If he guessed you were my grandson you would join those laughers."

It argued well, the elder man thought, as he watched closely, for the boy's courage, that the difficulties ahead only seemed to spur him on. That he had done ill in bringing him up to this end was lost sight of in the mania for revenge that possessed him.

"Now a few words as to the money end of it," said Stephen Wallis. "I have never been a poor man and these twenty years here in which I have not touched my fortune—our fortune, Phillip—makes it possible for you to draw on large resources. I am thinking of Dunham in particular. He is skilled in taking the money that the Eastern tenderfoot has with him. It may be a good thing to let him play you as one of them. But that you must find out for yourself. I do not want to see you until you can come back and tell me your father and your mother are avenged.

"I shan't come back till they are," said the other.

## IV

LEAFLETS distributed on the immigrant train that Phillip Wallis took to the West showed him plainly that he was going to a country where the ignorant or incautious would be victimized.

Phillip had his first experience of the lengths to which these thieves might go on the Overland Stage running from Yuma on the Arizona-California line to Mesilla in New Mexico. His destination was Tucson, which was roughly half way.

A swarthy man of middle age boarded the stage at Antelope Peak, fifty miles from Yuma. He was thin and tall with a cast in one eye. He put on such an expression of amiability that Phillip Wallis at once suspected him. The other occupant of the back seat of the Concord coach was a New Jersey farmer, from Elizabeth. This man had tried to talk to Wallis, but the lad was not inclined for conversation, so he greeted the newcomer in a friendly fashion.

The dark stranger remarked to Wallis that he had made a fortune among the silver mines of the Territory and just heard that land of his near the celebrated Goodwin mine at Turkey Creek was causing Phoenix capitalists to get together and buy it. The swarthy stranger had a plan worth two of that. With his own capital and that of a few friends, whom he could trust, he would work it himself. He said he was an unerring judge of humankind and liked Phillip Wallis at first glance. He would let him come in on his mining venture. The silver ore at the Goodwin mine had assayed at fifteen hundred dollars the ton.

"Not in my line," said the youngster, briefly. He had met other men like this one on the journey. He did not suppose that the Jersey farmer would be taken in by such talk, but saw, later on, that the stranger was gradually persuading him to put his whole savings—two thousand dollars, as the farmer admitted—in his keeping.

When the conversation had reached this stage, Phillip Wallis passed across the man next to him, into the hand of the farmer, the warning to emigrants, with part of it underlined.

"Do not," the Jersey farmer read, "be in a hurry to buy land unless with the approval of men you can trust. Take a month or two to get information about the country. Advice about the purchase of land is often given with corrupt motives."

Phillip could see that this official notice had swayed the emigrant to caution. "I'll come and see your property first," he announced.

The swarthy stranger, who had taken almost a day to talk the farmer into a purchasing mood, threw an evil glance at the young man who had spoiled his game.

"I would not sell it to you if you offered me a million," he cried angrily. His accent now proved him a Mexican. "As for this man here, he is not under your charge. He has a mind of his own. I offer to give him riches because I like him. I do not need money. I am no beggarly emigrant like you. I have my own horses, but I ride this way because it is convenient."

"I guess it is just a business trip," Phillip Wallis smiled, "and this is a poor day."

As the night fell Wallis slumbered, for the heat of the day had been beyond anything he had ever experienced. When he awoke, the swarthy stranger had gone. The Jersey farmer was sitting hunched in his seat asleep. Once or twice, as the coach bumped over the uneven road, he nearly fell. Instinctively, Phillip Wallis put out his hand to steady him and warn him slumber might be dangerous. Something warm and sticky was on the farmer's coat. It was his lifeblood. The Mexican, despairing of getting the money another way, had stabbed him.

The coach was stopped and an examination of the man made. He had nothing of value left upon him. None had seen the Mexican leave the coach.

"Must have jumped down as we went over the Gila Ridge. There's a road through the old Papago country leading down to some mines and deserted Indian villages. I reckon there's nobody going to get him. I didn't get a square look at him. Anybody notice him particular?"

"I did," said a man, evidently a fellow countryman of the murderer, who was laboring under considerable excitement. "And because I did I did not let him see me. Once he threatened to kill me, and

if he had seen me it would have happened. So I pull my hat down and nearly die of heat, pretending I am drunk." He looked at Phillip Wallis. "Why he did not kill you I do not know. It must be because you had no money."

"Who was it?" the driver demanded.

"Pedro Pimeria. You have heard of him, eh?"

"Sure," said the driver, "but I thought he was hanged at Fort Bayard last year."

"He was hanged, but no rope can kill him. No bullet but a silver one. He has the evil eye. Dio Moi, what an escape I have had!"

Pedro Pimeria. The name meant very much more to Phillip Wallis than to anyone else on the stage. He was one of the three Mexicans who had taken part in the fatal raid. His name was on the list of those to be punished. Phillip thought there was fate in this meeting at the outset of his journey. It was as though Pimeria had been sent to test his mettle. He had little or no baggage, and what money he carried could not readily be found.

"Hey, where are you going?" the driver asked, as the younger man leaped to the ground.

"I'm going to get the murderer."

"You must be loco. He'll get you. Hell! You Eastern tenderfoots ain't got no business in this country. You're children. Climb back. I've got time to make up."

The other passengers assumed that the dead man was either a relative or friend of this champion, and commended his attitude and gave him advice which was useless. The Mexican who had identified Pedro Pimeria merely crossed himself from old habit. This tall young man was going to his death.

"I hope Pedro will kill you instead of putting you to the torture. You will be so helpless in his hands."

"Maybe," said Phillip Wallis. "But which way did he go?"

He listened carefully to what the other had to say about the lay of the country. Then he watched the coach, with its six horses, vanish into the night. This was the beginning of his task. He was a hundred and fifty miles from Tucson, but he could get there later. Although there were many Indians in the neighborhood, they were Pimas, and being an industrial and agricultural tribe, peaceful and not aggressive, he knew he was in no danger from them.

He did not experience the feeling that one does who is in a far and strange country. Born in this vast West, it was in his blood. He went over the trail the Mexican had pointed out as noiselessly as an Indian. In the morning he would pick up the tracks that the murderer had left. He was content. The quest had begun.

Pedro Pimeria chuckling at the ease with which he had gained two thousand dollars, a gold watch and a razor of Sheffield manufacture, made for a little adobe hut in the mountains. It was inconspicuously situated and it was here he eached his treasures. It was one of many refuges. Not far distant was his horse hidden in a little natural corral among the rocks with plentiful grass and water all the year around. Pedro was here on the business of his superior although when this superior was born Pedro had already a considerable reputation as a bandit.

"Billy the Kid," as Pedro's chief was named, was a Mexican half-breed with the cruel qualities of both races marked; better known in the Panhandle of Texas and New Mexico, than this Western part of Arizona. His part in the Apache outbreak, and the Lincoln county cattle war had made him so dreaded a figure that the government was determined to get him. Not since Joaquin Murieta had ridden up and down California slaying, robbing and torturing thirty years before had such a scourge been known. A boy in years, he commanded outlaws who until his coming had brooked no rivals. They recognized in him a superior type of cunning, a master mind and were glad to serve under his banner.

Pedro Pimeria was not deemed an important member of his band. They used him mainly to gather particulars as to the amount of silver or gold being convoyed from the mines to the towns, the time of despatch and the number of guards. Despite his cruel face and uneven eyes Pedro had a knack of ingratiating himself with unsuspecting travelers from whom much valuable information and loot could be gathered.

He had made a good beginning, he thought, as he spread the Jersey farmer's possession on the table. He hid the money and watch but kept the razor at hand. He was expert in its use. He made himself an ample meal and slept without fear of interruption.

In this he made a grievous error. He awakened next morning when a ray of sunlight shone on the evil, seamed face which had seen so much lust and cruelty. Opening his narrow black eyes he looked into those of the taciturn young American who had compelled him to do murder when he had been commanded to attract no attention to himself.

Being without any weapon other than the razor, under his pillow, he did not try to reach for it. The American was sitting sideways on the table and a big revolver was balanced carelessly on his knees.

Pimeria's scarred visage broke into a smile.

"You do me great honor," he said humbly, "A hut such as this is no fit place to receive so distinguished a guest." He wanted to be allowed to leave his couch to prepare coffee. If the American permitted it his host's coffee would have a leaden taste to it. Just behind the uninvited guest was a shelf whereon was a revolver of the same caliber as that which menaced him. Also Pedro Pimeria was adept at strangling. He could press his great thumbs into a victim's neck with such agonizing force that there was no energy left for the unfortunate one to scream. "You will permit me to make you some coffee, señor?"

"Don't move," said the young man sternly. "I'll permit you to remain in bed. You killed a man last night."

"Oh, no, señor! That is impossible to prove."

"I shall not try to. You killed him and I am going to kill you."

"Even if your statement were true, señor, why should you take upon yourself a blood feud for a stranger, a man who did not like you, a man to whom you would not speak?"

Pedro Pimeria was frightened. He was used to violence and killing but when Americans killed it was either in hot blood or else they were members of a sheriff's posse. Here was a beardless stranger who had no cause for a quarrel unless it was the loot he coveted. Pimeria was a good judge of men, and he saw nothing of the brigand in this young face. And as he was a stranger here, Pimeria would bluff it out. He told his story simply. He said he was in reality a small farmer whom brigands had almost ruined. If he could get a little money he could work the property next to the Goodwin mine. He had a wife and many children dependent upon him. Men honored his name not because he was of birth or education but because he was honest. He asked the Mother of God and all Her Holy Saints to bear witness.

"I am not going to kill you because of the man you murdered last night—although that is cause enough to justify it—but because of a murder, a double murder, you helped to commit twenty years ago. Do you remember the man and woman you killed in the Santa Catalina mountains when Big Cassity jumped their claim?"

"What are you to do with that?" Pedro Pimeria cried.

"I was the little child the woman tried to carry away into safety at the cost of her own life. I am one of the Sillaws."

"Then I am a dead man," Pedro Pimeria cried in an agonized voice. He remembered vividly the night. But the spectacle that filled him most with fear was the terror the name of "Doc" Sillaw inspired. The old man had not told his grandson of that year of murder-filled rage when his own life seemed worth so little that he risked it continually and not one of those raiders but trembled for his own safety. He saw the Sillaw features in the man who looked so coldly at him. He saw the same great frame steel-muscled and quick as the panther. He, Pedro Pimeria, who had tortured so many men, who had jeered at them before he slew was now in the same position.

Despairingly he looked around the one room which was his home. It was more a ruin than a room. The two windows were without glass. Only the door was barred. It must be through a window the stranger had entered. One to the east where the sun came through early was but four feet from the ground. The western

aperture was twenty feet above the bushes at the base of a bluff.

Watching him closely Phillip Wallis saw despair fade from the fear-stricken face. It was succeeded by a faint look of hope which presently broadened into a smile of triumph. The Mexican's eyes lighted with joy as he gazed over the stranger's shoulder to the eastern window. It was plain that he was greeting a rescuer.

"Quick, amigo," Pedro shouted, "Shoot before he turns and gets you."

Instinctively Phillip Wallis sprang to his feet and faced about him to meet this new peril. And as he did so Pedro sprang behind him. Like a flash the bandit leaped through the open window and fell into the bushes below. It took but a second for the American to see he had been tricked. But that second sufficed for Pedro Pimeria. He satisfied himself that he was not hurt, only bruised a little. If he could get his horse he would escape easily for he knew the country.

It was a dreadful moment for Phillip Wallis. He had told this escaping man who he was. Were Pimeria to escape he would warn the others and the plan old Stephen Wallis had made so carefully would fail. The Mexican had not gone ten yards on his way when his pursuer leaped through the window. Pedro ran for his life and he fled with the speed of desperation. It was a proof of the fear in which the Sillaw breed was held that he thought only of flight and not of a fight. Down the mountain side he raced to the little enclosed corral where his horse grazed. At one point the decline was so steep that he had to climb down slowly to avoid a dangerous fall. Behind him Phillip Wallis saw a horse grazing and knew if the outlaw reached the animal there would be no chance to get him before the others of the gang had been warned. It meant that unless Pimeria was stopped the life of Phillip Wallis was not worth the snap of a finger.

He took a desperate chance. He was fifteen feet above the bandit and the descent was sheer. No human being could go faster than Pedro who was nerved to desperation. More used to the path, the Mexican was increasing the gap between them. In the jump from the window Phillip had lost his revolver and had not discovered the loss in time to retrieve the weapon. There was just one chance. It was a last resort but the American did not hesitate. He jumped down on the man below. If he missed him he would fall a sheer hundred feet to the rocky bottom. If he hit him he might be able to break his fall or clutch at a jagged rock.

Too late Pedro saw his doom. He screamed aloud in terror. Then the heavy heels of the avenger struck him on the head and snapped the supporting neck like a pipestem. Together the two fell. At the foot of the cliff they lay entwined, motionless. But whereas the head of the outlaw was twisted so that the chin rested almost against the shoulderblade of its own body, there was life in the bruised younger man. But he was unconscious for more than an hour. When he came to he crawled to the little stream and washed his wounds with icy water. He had no broken bones. It seemed that only a miracle had saved him.

He looked at the body of Pedro Pimeria and smiled grimly. It was a good beginning.

Leaving the dead bandit, Phillip climbed the steep bluff with pain and difficulty and came to the adobe hut. This he searched thoroughly. An amazing quantity of loot was discovered cunningly hidden. Jewels there were and gold, but what interested the seeker much more than these was a paragraph from the *Arizona Citizen,* published at Florence, A. T., a weekly paper three months old, devoted largely to mining interests and stock business.

*"Last Tuesday at Camp Bowie, Apache Pass, Chiricahua Mountains, a posse under Deputy Sheriff Ralston captured and hanged the notorious outlaws Juan Ensenada and Romo Clementez."*

Phillip Wallis struck these two names from the list he had memorized. At his hands Pedro had joined his two companions in crime. Seven were left. He remembered his grandfather had not seemed to consider the Mexicans as of great danger. It spoke volumes for those he was yet to encounter.

The money which Pimeria had taken from the New Jersey farmer was partly in gold and partly in paper money. There

were letters from the dead man's wife so Phillip had no difficulty in writing her an account of the tragedy and returning the money. He assured her that Pedro Pimeria had been killed by a friend of her husband. In case she needed any further particulars he gave his address in care of his grandfather's agent at Tucson. The gold he kept, sending to the widow a like amount in paper money which he took from his secret store.

Bathing his wounds he rested until the daybreak of the following morning. In a country where almost every man's horse is recognized he did not think it wise to take Pimeria's. He walked down to the pass over which the stage must come and waited. He was asked no questions. One did not ask another idly his business and what he planned to do.

So Phillip Wallis unquestioned climbed aboard, paid his fare in gold, as was demanded, and reached Tucson without further adventure. The capital of the Territory, then a town of five thousand inhabitants was the place where he would find his grandfather's agent.

John Binstead was a lawyer, an elderly man who did a great deal of business. On the door was printed:

*"Practice in all the Courts of the Territory." Special Assistance given in obtaining Patents for Mining and Pre-emption Claims, and also Title to and under the Desert Land and Timber Culture Laws."*

The office, on the north side of Congress street, was crowded when Phillip entered. It was his first meeting with what might be called a representative group of Westerners. There were politicians, stockmen and miners. To a clerk he gave his name and said, as he had been told by his grandfather, that he wanted to see Mr. Binstead concerning patents for a pre-emption claim.

Mr. Binstead in passing through the outer office gave the lad a sharp look. There was no smile of recognition or welcome on his face.

"I'll attend to you presently," he said curtly. His tone was in marked contrast to that he used to greet other men. Those who had glanced at the stranger curiously when he entered now saw that he was of no importance, a poor client waiting, hat in hand, for advice that he could not pay for.

An hour later a clerk showed him into Binstead's private office.

"Be seated," said the attorney still writing. When the clerk had left the room Mr. Binstead's actions were curious. He went softly to the door and closed it. Then he turned to Phillip Wallis. The hard, scowling look was gone. Friendliness, almost affection, was on his face. He held out both hands cordially. "Boy, I'm surely glad to see your father's son in my office. Your grandfather was my benefactor and your father my closest friend. I've had a letter from him in which I had to read between the lines. From what he says about you you're the finest young man who ever breathed the Territory air."

"He said that about me?" cried Phillip.

"I'll read it," said the lawyer and took a letter from a drawer. "Listen, Phillip, 'I am sending my grandson out to find what I was compelled to leave undone. I think he is the best of all the Sillaws. He has taken naturally to accomplishments which are beyond the scope of most. He is stronger, more active and a better shot than I was at his age. Experience he lacks, but he is close-tongued and his judgments are rarely at fault. He has the cold nerve to succeed, and you must help him when he asks. I do not think he will ask much, except perhaps for money if he wants it. I have the utmost confidence in him. I have brought him up in a hard school and I do not suppose he will ever care for me. I have set myself resolutely not to take him into my heart lest when the time came I should hold him back for fear his father's fate might be his.'"

Mr. Binstead put the letter away.

"I thought he had always despised me," said Phillip. He felt very proud at what he had heard.

"Apparently not," said the lawyer. "I'll tell you now that I think you are very foolish to keep up this vendetta. Bill Cassity was mainly to blame and your grandfather killed him. I was never a man for violence. I can't shoot and I can't ride and that saves me a whole lot. You are going up against bad men with influence. You can't be long in Tucson without hearing about Dunham and Kenner. I'm told Herman Bauer has the

wildest dance hall in Tombstone and Tombstone's a town that boasts it has a man for breakfast every morning. My boy, if you run foul of Herman you may be a Tombstone breakfast."

"I know," Phillip said with indifference, "I've heard about them. I'm going to Tombstone first."

"Going to get Bauer first?" Binstead had no appetite for the violence that was in the very air of the Territory. In a court of law he could be fiery but he trembled whenever he saw his outer office filled with these fearless, freeshooting desperadoes. It was in Binstead's office that Fitch shot "Cap" Parker because he accidentally spat on Fitch's newly polished shoes.

"Bauer will be the second," Phillip said. "I broke Pedro Pimeria's neck a day or two back. Don't look so horrified, Mr. Binstead. I haven't come here to murder people. I'm after a longer revenge than that. I wouldn't last ten minutes if I shot Bauer in his own town. I'm going to look things over first so I don't misfire when I'm ready."

"Well, I see your mind is made up, and there's no use trying to convince a Sillaw against his will. I'll see you before you go. Where are you staying?"

"At the Palace Hotel."

"Fine. Mitchell will treat you right. He's one of the best surveyors in the Territory. Some of the best people stay there." He paused a moment, "If you give me your word you are not going to start shooting, I'll give you some information."

"I won't give you any trouble, Mr. Binstead."

"Did you notice anyone out in the office specially?"

"I noticed them all from the fat Southerner with bunions to the slick, pomaded politician asking people to vote for him."

"That same politician used to be called 'Three-Fingered Harry.' He didn't come back to the Territory till the Apaches killed your grandfather, or he thought they did. Harry's a great mixer now and has one of the finest houses in town. As for the fat Southerner. He was born in Saint Louis the son of a Scotch emigrant. He used to be called 'Scotty Maxwell' in the old days. He has given himself the rank of 'Colonel' now. If you want to die young go and pretend he isn't a military man."

"What's he doing here?"

"Any dirty work Harry doesn't want to mix in. I can say what I like about him; he isn't a client, but don't ever make the mistake of thinking because he's fat and sleepy looking he isn't dangerous. He has waded through more blood to get that rank of colonel than any other ten generals in the regular army. Bad men both of them."

"Has Three-Finger Harry Chapin any chance?"

"If Dunham and Kenner swing around to him he can't lose."

Phillip could not keep back some show of excitement at these names. "Steady, now," Binstead cautioned."

Phillip smiled. "I'm not here to get killed," he said. "I'd like to know where Dunham and Kenner are."

"Right here in Tucson where the wires are pulled. They've cut out the old life. Steen, Hawes and Bauer are the ones who stick to their guns. Some day this will be a State and the wealthiest in the Union and we shall want senators for Washington. Big politics have more attractions for Kenner and Dunham than rustling cattle and jumping claims. They founded their fortunes on robbery but they want to keep straight now. Moderately straight, that is. If people—you for instance—get in their way they have them removed same as I might get you to take a midge out of my eye."

"I'd like to see them," said Phillip.

"You will if you stop at the Palace very long." He reached out his hand and patted the young man on the shoulder, "Come and see me tomorrow at this time. I'll scowl at you out there in the office but you know now that's for your own good. Somehow I don't think you are in need of as much advice as most Eastern tenderfoots are. All I can think of now is: don't take sides in other folks' quarrels. Reserve your judgments. Above all don't get friendly with any of these women you meet in the dance halls."

"I don't like women," said Phillip Wallis deliberately.

Binstead shook his head. "Your kind falls hardest when the time comes. Some

day you'll meet the only woman who understands you. That's the kind to avoid."

## V

THE Palace Hotel drew to its newly furnished lobby most of Tucson's notables. Its liquors were good and it was a free-drinking age. Politicians gathered at the Palace and those who wished to be politicians. Wealthy stockmen and mine owners mingled with miners and cowboys because democracy was in the air and exclusiveness resented but the house was well run and during his stay there Phillip saw no bloodshed. Tucson at this time was not a tough town as towns went in Territorial days in the eighties. What law and order there was in the vast country emanated from headquarters here. What went in a new and rough mining settlement like Tombstone was frowned upon in the capital. Few took any notice of the quiet stranger. It was known that he had come to Binstead about a pre-emption claim. He was, therefore, one of many and in no way conspicuous. He drank little, forced himself on none and involved himself in no quarrels. He was soon forgotten in the political atmosphere of the place.

None around him knew how his heart beat when he heard several people say, "Here comes Dunham."

Certainly Dunham was a repulsive person in appearance. He was carefully dressed in a black frock coat affected at that period by politicians. The two powerfully built men who accompanied him were, so an eager informant said, his secretaries. To Phillip they looked like bodyguards. Dunham's scarred face was not so conspicuous as it had been by reason of a lank wisp of hair trained to cover the dead eye and blackened cheek-bone. The jaw was powdered. Phillip thought that the light brown eye which took in the throng at a quick glance had nothing of fear in it. There was arrogance and a consciousness of the power money brings in a crowd of desperate men who had come from all parts of the globe for gold and, in the main, had failed.

And indeed One-Eye Dunham was not troubled by any pangs of remorse. The Sillaw tragedy had been real enough in its day because of the implacable Doctor Sillaw who had sworn to kill him and had forced Wild Pat Cassity to his doom and others of the band who had filled that night with shame. There was never better news than that Magnus Colorado's band had killed Sillaw in Old Mexico. He had been mixed up in other shameful affairs but had forgotten most of them in his fascinating dream of wealth and political power.

He was using his money freely to have the warrant against him in California quashed. Unless this were done he could not openly identify himself with Territorial politics. Few knew that he aimed at governorship. Kenner, his friend, knew, and Three-Finger Harry Chapin. Arizona was incredibly rich and Dunham knew every crooked angle of the mining game.

He came into the Palace Hotel that night very much as Senator Platt in a famous New York hostelry was wont to stroll to his seat in Amen Corner. His it was to dispense power although he held no office. The younger politicians had to pass his scrutiny. If there was any chance that they were inclined to be independent or friendly with his enemies they had the opportunity to bow the knee to Dunham or incur his implacable enmity.

Without seeming to see Phillip Wallis he detected the presence of a stranger. At this time Dunham feared only that his plans might be carried to a rival party of politicians hailing from Phoenix.

One of the bodyguards detached himself from his principal and dropped naturally into a seat next the unknown. He immediately set about pumping what information from him he could get. Phillip did not make the mistake of withholding it. He acted very perfectly the part of an emigrant who thinks he has been swindled in a land deal. He was almost timorous in his manner and asked advice so respectfully that the guard left him without saying good-bye.

"Know who that was?" one of the least important in the group said to Phillip after the manner of one who likes to impart information. "That's Jim Steen who used to deal faro at O'Brien's place at Albuquerque. He's Dunham's bodyguard and as quick on the draw as ever Dunham was when he was using a gun.

"Why did he talk to me?" Phillip asked innocently.

"Dunham's particular now. If you hadn't been all right you'd have been thrown out. If you'd have tried to come back Jim would have said you'd pulled a gun on him and he'd beat you to it."

The informant laughed to see the uneasiness which was depicted on Phillip's face. These tenderfoots from the East! He watched the lad slouch with his slow, ungainly countryman's stride to the stairs on his way to bed. When his door was locked Phillip sat on the edge of his bed and laughed softly. Things were coming very easily. Four of the men he had come to seek were in the town of Tucson. Kenner, the fifth, was expected shortly. They would be here perhaps two months.

Strangely enough he felt more animus toward the unseen Bauer than the men he had met. He would start with Bauer. Then he would get Hawes if possible and return here to Tucson with some plan worked out which should involve them all.

Next day he sat an hour in Binstead's outer office. Jim Steen, ex-faro dealer saw him and nodded. He was satisfied now that the young man was what he claimed to be. Steen wanted nothing to stand in the way of his patron's successful looting of the Territory.

Phillip told Mr. Binstead that he had seen the dreaded Dunham.

"He's the brains of the bunch," Binstead conceded, "with about as much generosity as a scorpion. Kenner thinks he is using Dunham. When the time comes Kenner will go, Scotty will go, Steen will go. Dunham will be the survivor. Those others know too much."

"What about Bauer?"

"You couldn't drag Herman from his bar and his dancing girls. He wants nothing from politics. Down there at the Lorelei Dance Hall in Tombstone he lives the life he loves. Wine, woman and song. And Herman, let me tell you, can sing. He is as strong as an ox, a dead shot and every man in his employ is a criminal. And each knows that if Herman Bauer fell they would go with him. You saw the two men who guard Dunham. I tell you Herman has forty men who would go to the mat for him and not for love of him at that. He sells the best liquors in Tombstone and has the best meals. As to the women there—well you'll see. Tombstone is a bad man's town and if there's a worse man there than Herman I'd like to know his name. He has enemies—Bat Masterson for example—but in a pinch he could get a bigger bunch together than any deputy in the Territory. After all, boy, men don't want to go to hell sooner than they have to. You'll find all the hewolves in Cochise County in the Lorelei. Steer clear of them."

With these dangers ringing in his mind Phillip Wallis crossed the Dragoon mountains and came to the town with the graveyard name. As protection against Apaches he traveled with a number of Indian fighters. Every yard of the way the stage took had been drenched with blood in the long feud of the red man against the invading white. There was rumor that Geronimo's band was on the war path. The Apache war chief was bitterly resentful at the way his people had been tricked by General Crook and had sworn, anew, vengeance. But on the journey no turbaned red man was seen.

Tombstone bore no resemblance to the orderliness of Tucson. It was wide open, it intended to be wide open and pistol duels were the recognized ways of settling disputes. Into this town, which was no more than a mining camp, the scum of villainy had poured from Texas to California, Kansas to Old Mexico. To the north of them the gradual growth of law and order was driving the killers to the Territories. Here they were safe. Here right gave way to might and night was always day. Miners and stockman came here with their money. And for every one of them waited a dozen who schemed to get their earnings.

Into the Lorelei Dance Hall with its gambling rooms and bars poured young men and old. Like a big spider Herman Bauer sat on a raised platform at one end. It was on this dais that the dancers performed and he occupied a huge chair at one side. Here he could command a view of the big hall and signal to his lieutenants any orders that were necessary. He was massing money so fast in this, relatively, honest business that he did not want to have his place closed. There was not much danger of it but the law and order

men in the town had warned him that killings were too frequent in his saloon.

At fifty years of age Bauer was a presentable looking man of the florid type. He had always been heavy. Physically he was immensely strong but short of wind and useless in any contest where speed was called for. He had a bluff heartiness of manner which impressed a newcomer. But this manner veiled as cruel a nature and as ruthless a one as could be found in the Territory. It is almost inconceivable to one living in the orderly life of today to realize what Tombstone was like at the time Phillip Wallis came to it. Men who sought quarrels were certain of a short life. Those who tried to avoid them were as likely to stop the lead from a forty-five Colt as the intended victim. A man buying a horse from what appeared to be its owner might be strung to a tree within a day because he had been found riding a stolen nag. There were no protracted trials. Things moved too quickly.

Tombstone was near enough to the Mexican line to be the meeting place of Mexican bandits. Here they kept tab on the amount of silver or gold taken from the nearby mines and organized expeditions to hold up the stage carrying dust or bar gold and silver. And the looting bandits might as likely be ambushed by Apaches as not. That was what happened to the Mexican bandit chief, Claudio Zarca, who held up a gold-laden stage from Alexandria and killed every man on it.

Apaches who had started out to do this very thing allowed Zarca and his men to bear the brunt of the battle. Then they fell on the victors and put them to torture and death. Claudio Zarca was a big man with an immense black beard, so the method of scalping him was something out of the common. The entire skin of his head, face and hairy breast was removed in one piece with the ears attached. It was carefully cured and esteemed "big medicine."

Working in Tombstone at this period were honest, fearless deputies who took their lives in their hands every minute. Such men were respected by the lawless for this cold courage. Judicial executions were common but the sheriff's men were too few to cope with the flood of criminals who found Tombstone a mecca.

A small, neat-looking man with a shield looked at Phillip Wallis as he was about to enter the Lorelei. Phillip was later to learn that the quiet smiling young man was the famous Billy Breckenbridge, the deputy whom Sheriff Behan had once told to go and collect taxes among the Dragoon mountains in Cochise County where the outlaws hid. And this small, even-tempered young man had done it.

"Stranger here?" queried Breckenbridge.

"Yes," Phillip answered.

The deputy looked toward the Lorelei and shook his head.

"Not a good place to enter society," he smiled. "If you have money don't talk about it." He paused a moment. The newcomer was an exceedingly good looking young man. "If you're bound to go and sample Herman's liquor there's no use talking, but be careful not to pay much attention to the new dancing girl from Phoenix. She's Herman's pet just at present."

"I shan't do more than look at her," Phillip said confidently.

"I didn't mean that exactly. Don't let her talk to you enough to make Herman jealous. I know what would happen. There'd be a sudden cry that you'd insulted a woman. Then you'd be thrown out here under the horse's hoofs with a neat little collection of bullets in you, and not a man in Tombstone to mourn for you." He pointed to a little mound a half mile distant. "That's Tombstone's boot-hill. Know what that means?"

True to his instructions to appear ignorant of these picturesque Western terms, Phillip shook his head. "I'm from Connecticut," he said.

"A boot-hill," said Breckenbridge, "is where they plant men who die with their boots on. Ours is getting along pretty well. Not so long ago I came down here from Colorado and was as green as grass. If I can keep any boy like you out of trouble I'm glad to."

He nodded pleasantly, unhitched his horse and rode away.

Phillip entered the saloon and strolled to the end of the long bar nearest the platform on which he had heard Herman Bauer would be found. Another large room at right angles to the saloon proper was filled with gambling outfits. Roulette

and faro seemed the popular indoor sports. It was too early in the day for the crowds to be there. The newcomer gazed about him with no show of undue curiosity. But he knew that he was not unnoticed. The professional sharpers, ever on the lookout for simple-minded emigrants from farming states, looked upon him as a prospective victim.

Bauer had glanced at him and then taken no further notice. If he had come with a reputation some of Bauer's jackals would have told him. None of the singing and dancing girls were in sight. Their work would start with the evening and last till dawn. But Phillip Wallis had come to see Bauer and he was not in a hurry.

In his own saloon Bauer was the dominating force. His shrewd, small, gluttonous eyes missed nothing. His own men he addressed with oaths and they moved quickly at his command. There were crude attempts at decoration as Bauer understood the term; paintings he had bought from a St. Louis saloon, large blond ladies reclining on clouds, all scantily arrayed. It was noised abroad that any gunfighter who took a shot at these canvases should die within ten seconds of his desecration of art. One had tried it and occupied a few feet of the boot-hill that same day.

Phillip found accommodation at a Camp House and Feed Yard which was a large corral and boarding house for teamsters and such as had little money to spend. By the time he went again to the Lorelei he had a fund of information as to local political conditions.

From the proprietor of the Camp House he bought a good pony. He found he could not do without one. It had belonged to a cowboy now lying in the boot-hill and was being sold to defray the board bill of the dead man and his mount. It was in good condition and had a turn of speed as its new owner found when he rode out of town.

It was on this little jaunt that Phillip Wallis made a friend. At the moment he did not realize the importance of this. In a turn of the trail over the hills he came upon a senseless man and a horse from whose left hind leg blood was pouring. He saw the man was stunned from the fall so carried him to the shade of some boulders and staunched the horse's wound skilfully. Then he found water in a little creek and bathed the man's face.

From his hands it was neither stockman nor miner that Phillip tended. They were small hands, well kept. He carried two forty-fives and a Winchester was on the ground where the horse had fallen.

Phillip's first intimation that the stranger had recovered his consciousness was a sharp command to throw up his hands.

"That's a hell of a way to talk to a man who has been trying to help you," Phillip retorted and did not raise his hands.

The voice of the stranger was well modulated. It was not the manner of speech of the majority in Tombstone and its vicinity.

"You are the first man who didn't put them up when he heard my voice," said the other. "I think you had a pretty close call then."

"Maybe," said Phillip indifferently, "So did you, come to that." He pointed to the horse. "He was bleeding to death. What was it? A bullet?"

"Yes. You must have scared him away when you came along. Did you see anyone?"

"No. A pretty poor shot to aim at a man and get his horse in the leg."

"He is a poor shot. I know who it was. This makes his second attempt."

"Wouldn't you be justified in getting him?"

"Yes. But not in Tombstone. They are waiting for a chance to get me. I was safe with the old gang which ran the place but I'm short with this one." The stranger lifted the butts of his two guns into view. "I make my living with these and I never miss so there's some natural hesitation in trying to get me openly. I wonder if you have been long enough out here to know my name. I'm John Ringo."

John Ringo! The men at the Camp House had talked of nobody else. This was the man they termed the big He Wolf of all the outlaws, the brain behind the band which had ranged so widely through Arizona and New Mexico. The stockman at the Camp House had told incredible stories of how John Ringo and Curly Bill had been wholesale rustlers, driving their raided stock to a Galeyville cattle-buyer who was never unwise enough to ask whence they came. Many were the stories

of Ringo's origin. Some said he came of a great California family; others that he was the son of an English nobleman banished from his country for unknown crimes. It was certain that he was far above the rest of the men he commanded.

"I've heard of you," said Phillip, looking at him with interest.

"And you wish now you had tied me up and carried me into town and claimed a reward?" There was a sneer on the sullen, thin face of the outlaw now.

"I've no quarrel with you," Phillip Wallis said simply. "You and your horse needed my help and I helped you; that's all. The law has been no help to me and I've no cause to go out of my way to help the sheriff."

John Ringo had rubbed shoulders with desperate men for years. He was apt at judging their motives. This gift had kept him unharmed when many another of his friends had been killed. This stranger puzzled him. He had aided him, looked after his wounded horse. And when he knew of his record the lad made no remark nor evinced any fear. Counties had trembled when Ringo and his men came riding. Did this mean the stranger was even now plotting to get him? John Ringo could not afford to give him the benefit of the doubt. He picked up his Winchester and climbed slowly into the saddle.

"You came out of Tombstone," he said sharply, "Get back there as soon as you can. Any suspicious move on your part means a stall in the boot-hill. You talk as smoothly as Bill Breckenbridge and for all I know you may be a deputy imported just to take me in."

"You've got to be cautious," Phillip answered without heat, "in your place I'd be just as suspicious but I'm neither deputy nor your enemy. It's your misfortune you can't take an honest man on trust."

Phillip rode back into Tombstone thinking over the stories he had heard about this most notorious of outlaws. He had learned enough of the conditions of this wild and lawless life in the West not to feel irritated at the surliness on Ringo's part.

He did not guess that he had made a friend that day of a man whose inner life was secret even from his intimates. He was not to know that ere long John Ringo would stand at his side when red death confronted them both.

## VI

THE Lorelei Dance Hall in the evening was thronged when Phillip entered. It was his first sight of the old-time gambling hell running throttle open. Men had come to drink and they had the price. Sheep and wolves were there. The shorn and the shearers. Cheerfulness and hilarity filled the air. So far no quarrels had developed.

Herman Bauer, who had in his younger days delighted to shoot up saloons, was glad there was a town ordinance forbidding men to ride their horses into saloons as had been his wont ten years back. He was beginning to think that this saloon of his would some day be a great hotel when Arizona was a state and Tombstone had grown to the biggest city in the West. Not that he was a reformer nor ever would be. He was one of the many who, tasting fortune for the first time, did not want to lose it.

Edging his way to the platform at the back of the room Phillip saw that it had the advantage of commanding both rooms. The bar and dance hall as well as the gambling room with the pool table in a far corner. The dancers were thus seen in either room. Bauer in his big chair was frowning. An elderly and faded blonde heavy-weight, who could easily have come with the forty-niners so far as age was concerned, had finished a dance and was jollying him. Not responding to her blandishments, she finally jumped from the dais and sat down at the next table to that where Phillip was now sitting. He could see that she was furiously angry.

In truth Herman Bauer was suffering from the pangs of unrequited love. The dancing girl from Phoenix had taken him by storm and she would not look at him. It all arose from his carelessness as to matrimonial affairs. He had offered to marry her, forgetting that two wives were ahead of her. When she had found this out she had repulsed him.

It was of this Phoenix girl that the elderly blonde was talking. As Phillip listened he saw that she was insanely jealous. There were ten girls at the Lorelei

all ready to work for the house and encourage drunken men to drink more—all but this stuck-up hussy from Phoenix who called herself an artist.

"She is that," said an Irishman at the table who had an eye for a pretty girl. "The like of her has never been in any mining camp since I was a boy. Shure you and me mother was at school together in the ould country and it's well you've stood the curse of time but it shows on your face nivertheless."

At these kind but truthful words the elderly dancer smote Gavin so hard that he fell off his chair and upset a man who was about to raise a glass to his lips. The two were in a fight within five seconds. When they had been separated the blonde lady was sitting at Phillip's table.

"Gord!" she said, "it's awful what a refined lady has to put up with out here. I'm well known in Noo Orleans but they don't understand art here. How can they with a thickheaded Dutchman like Herman running things?" Thereupon she poured out the story of her life, which had not a truthful paragraph in it. When she had finished the Irish miner, Mike Gavin, came back. He had a drink or two with his opponent after the fight and brought him back to introduce him to the dancer who now seemed younger and more beautiful. He did not see that she had moved from her table. It seemed to him that this unknown interloper occupied his seat. Only a battle could atone. Fortunately Mike was not a gun fighter or Phillip's errand might have ended there.

Mike's fist did not reach its mark. Phillip gripped it and pulled the intoxicated man to the floor. Thereupon Gavin's former foe took up his cause and in a few seconds twenty couples were joining in. Nobody picked on Phillip. Not a gun was fired. The bad men had not yet joined the throng. The combatants were miners and cattle hands and they used their fists.

Phillip, glad at being out of a melee which might have brought him under the notice of Bauer, sat at a far table. It was not well lighted and he did not see a girl was sitting opposite.

"Slipped out of that mighty cleverly, didn't you?" she drawled.

It was the dancer from Phoenix. He knew her instantly from her very unlikeness to the other girls. She was a brunette, dressed in a short skirt of orange silk with a black and orange bodice. Her eyes were almond-shaped and not large and he had never seen such milk white skin in his life. She could not have been five and twenty, yet world weariness was stamped on her face.

"Yes," he answered.

"Most men would deny it," she said. "All men are vain, and boastful brutes. Were you scared?"

"No."

"You're a great little word waster, aren't you?" she jeered.

"This is all strange to me," he said with a gesture that embraced the entire hall, "I come from New England. Men started fighting. I wasn't interested in it. They were drunk. I was sober. What good would it do to hit men so drunk they could see three of me?"

"That talk won't make you popular here. You've got to fight if you want to live."

"I shall when it is necessary."

"It may be before long. Herman Bauer's got his eye on you." She paused a moment, "What makes you hate him?"

"Hate him?" he said. "What do you mean. I've never spoken to him."

"I know what hate is," she returned, "and I saw it flare up in your face when I mentioned his name."

Suddenly she became interested in him. She saw a possible use for him. More than anything else at the present moment she wanted to hurt Herman Bauer. Just as the leader of an orchestra directs all instruments to produce his result, so the dancer in orange used men of all sorts to achieve her purposes. At a glance she had seen that this stranger was good-looking and resolute. That he was good-looking would make Bauer hate him all the more. And what could one man, no matter how brave, accomplish if Bauer marked him down for death?

"I'm thirsty," she said, "they have champagne here. I'd like some."

She called to a waiter. Expensive drinks were not much drunk in Tombstone because they had not the quick exhilaration of rye and bourbon and the drinker of the day wanted his kick instantly. Bauer saw that a nameless young man had succeeded where he had failed. From his

table above the smoke haze he watched. Phillip Wallis, although he knew little about women, was shrewd enough to put two and two together and realize that she was deliberately exasperating Herman Bauer.

Yet he could not very well leave her or rebuke her for what she did. He did not want her to jeer at him for cowardice. The wine he drank affected him little. It seemed no stronger than the heady cider to which he was accustomed at home. It made the dancer from Phoenix more reckless than ever. It seemed to the infuriated Herman that the ice had melted and she was losing her heart to an unappreciative and worthless boy. Of late Herman had learned that sudden vengeances were dangerous. His instinct to provoke a quarrel and kill had to be stifled. He wanted no more killings in the Lorelei than were absolutely necessary. One of his underlings was commissioned to find every particular about the stranger and return with it as soon as it was found.

Of the dance hall girls none had technique but the one from Phoenix. High kicking was art to the simple devotees who made up Tombstone. Thus it was that when the girl came on, few appreciated how well she danced. Bauer knew as did others who came from big cities. Phillip Wallis was entranced. He had never seen anything so beautiful. All the men in the throng knew she danced to him. There was something intoxicating in it. None dared laugh in Bauer's face as he sat there watching it. They knew his fingers were playing around the butt of a well-notched forty-five. Without seeming to do so they edged away from Phillip's table. If there was shooting to be done it was a matter between him and Bauer. It was not considered cowardly to withdraw from the danger zone when other men's quarrels began.

When the dance was over Bauer tried to draw her to him.

"Fat swine!" she cried, and struck him with the back of her ringed hand. Then she jumped from the platform and took again her seat by Phillip. He had come to the Lorelei to watch Bauer unobserved and find out how best to bring him crashing to earth, a ruined man, and now he was being forced into Herman's notice in the most unfavorable possible way. But he carried himself well. It was no time to chide her.

"You don't seem to like him," he said smiling. He would not let other men see he feared for himself.

Suddenly a shot rang out. It was not from Bauer's gun. It was a dispute about draw-poker in the gambling part of the establishment. Nobody was hurt but attention was taken from Phillip and Bauer.

"What's the reason of coming here and making Herman want to kill me?" Phillip asked. "If I'm to be killed I'd like to die for a woman who cared for me not one who is just making use of me."

"You're not so young as I thought you were," said the dancer. "I want to hurt Herman and you helped me but I shall never hurt him as much as he's going to hurt me. You don't believe me. Men never know when to believe a woman. I suppose you think I'm rotten all through because I'm here. I came here because he said he'd marry me. I've got a temper I'll admit."

"I saw you strike him just now," Phillip said.

"A Mexican girl would have knifed him. You see these things I'm dressed in now? Well, when I went to my room before my turn I found every stitch I brought here was gone. Stolen, they told me. What does that mean. Just this. I'm a prisoner here. A great chance of getting away dressed like this. This is the toughest place I ever struck and I've worked the West for three years. Herman says I shan't leave Tombstone till he's through with me."

Phillip did not know much of the world but he had enough sense to know that a dance hall girl can play upon men's weaknesses and emerge triumphant from the struggle. Although she was a pretty girl and far above the others in the Lorelei he did not believe she had come here without knowing well the kind of men she would meet and the sort of treatment to expect. He was afraid of becoming too sympathetic. Perhaps she saw this critical attitude.

"I'm not so much afraid of myself, it's my kid sister I'm worrying about. Her man wrote that I was sick and she was to come. He sent her money and she'll

be here tomorrow. My God! Think of it. The kid has never seen anything like this. It was a photograph I showed Herman that made him do it. He boasted he was above any Territory law and I guess he's right."

Phillip looked long at the photograph she handed him.

"Well?" she said.

"You must have been like this before you knew men of this sort!"

The dancer from Phoenix buried her face in her hands. Phillip knew she was crying. "I was," she said presently, "I could have kept that way if it wasn't for love of clothes. I've brought Effie up to think I was as good as gold." She laughed harshly through her tears. "Good as gold! That's the wrong thing to say out here where gold means murder and blinded justice. Don't get scared, I'm not going into hysterics. Effie will be here tomorrow from Mesilla in New Mexico. If the stage isn't held up by outlaws like John Ringo and his bunch or the Apaches she'll expect to find me making a decent living. She thinks I'm important enough to hire a hall and give my show. I think if I could be sure the stage would be held up and she'd be killed outright I'd be glad."

"Isn't there anyone to appeal to, anyone in authority?"

"How would my story sound. You know what men are to women like me. I'm a notorious character. That's what the sheriff would say about me and he'd think Effie was tarred with the same brush."

"Why did Bauer send for her?"

"To force me to go through a mock marriage ceremony. He figures it out that sooner than let Effie find me here I'll be Mrs. Herman Bauer living in the town in my own house."

"You're not going to do that?"

The girl laughed a little bitterly.

"Why not? I must. It's the only way to protect Effie. What I don't like about it is that I hate Herman Bauer worse than poison. Most men are beasts but he makes me shiver."

Phillip Wallis leaned forward. What he said was in a very low tone. "Honestly is he crazy over you or are you just boasting?"

"This time I mean it," she said. "It's come to a stage with him when he'd do murder to get me. Men of his age when they get what they call in love are the worst."

"You said I hated him," Phillip whispered, "well, that's true. I've a grudge against him that will be satisfied when I have wounded him so that death will seem a relief. Don't marry him."

"But what about Effie?" she said.

"I'll take her off the stage. She shan't come here."

"Are you an outlaw?" she demanded. This sudden change to action amazed her. There was something rather ruthless in the level eyes and high-arched nose.

"No. I've got a grudge against Bauer, that's all. That's what I came here for. You came over to this table to play me off against him. I'll play you against him —and I'll win. Just tell me Effie's name and when she left Mesilla and I'll keep her out of Tombstone."

When the girl saw that there was a man who would champion her cause she realized that he might not be able to get out of the dance hall alive. Bauer might instruct one of the other women to scream aloud that she had been insulted. That would be a signal for death and no jury would convict the slayer.

"Wait a bit," she cautioned, "if I go away now they may think I've been telling you too much. I'll act up a little as if I'm tired of you. Then I'll flit to another table and make Herman mad with someone else. Directly he's watching me you go into the pool room. There's a door marked private. It leads into the alley. My room is exactly over the passage so you can throw a letter in there if you want to. I'll leave it open."

He nodded in understanding.

He watched the friendly expression on her face change. Assuredly she was an actress. It seemed to him all those watching could see that she was sneering at him for an ignorant, presumptuous countryman. At the table to which she went she pointed him out and laughed. A bearded miner ordered more champagne and became so attentive that Bauer moved down from his chair and came slowly to the group. As soon as he could Phillip Wallis strode into the pool room and unobtrusively opened the door marked private

and found himself in an alley deserted except for some rigs.

The conversation he had with the dancing girl had been of necessity of a scrappy nature. Too many curious eyes were on him to allow him to ask more questions. But he did not worry about that. This was to be the first move against Herman Bauer. It would be easy to find out about the time the stage should arrive. They were seldom late. When they were, it meant they had been attacked and often then the drivers made up time. The stages were well-horsed and rarely did less than a hundred miles a day.

Unobtrusively he pulled out of Tombstone and rode north to the Dragoon Mountains. He was now as heavily armed as Ringo himself. He was going into the most dangerous country in the United States. He was venturing among outlaws, Apaches and Mexican bandits. Although the Apaches were being coaxed by the government to go into reservations, and some of them had gone to Indian Territory, there were still many marauding bands. His horse was a very fleet one and had been well kept. Ambush, the favorite Indian trick, was the only thing to fear.

Indians are dangerous only by day or when the moon is high. They almost never attack in the dark because they have a belief that if they are killed at night they will in the future life live in the dark where there can be no hunting and no pleasures. This superstition has saved innumerable white men from massacre. Phillip Wallis determined to take advantage of this by riding at night and lying hidden by day.

A teamster at the Camp House had told him the route the stage would take. At Summit Ridge a change of horses was made and connections effected between the Mesilla stage and the one to Tucson. He had decided to take the girl there and put her under the charge of someone recommended by Mr. Binstead. After that he would return to Tombstone and help Effie Cooper's sister to get away.

The stage from New Mexico was due at Summit Ridge at four in the afternoon. Among some boulders eighty feet above the road at a place where he could see the stage climbing for more than a mile, Phillip waited. He had traveled all night and found this natural hiding place at dawn. He made no fire to attract attention. Too many white men have sent up unconscious smoke signals to Indians in the preparation of their meals to make Phillip try it. He was used from long training to going without food.

He found himself wondering if Effie could be as lovely as the photograph showed her. Would she resent his presence? Might not some well-meaning travelers question his right in the matter? He had nothing to show for it, not a line from her sister. He reflected that he did not even know her sister's name. "The Dancer from Phoenix" was what she had been called.

It was almost four when he saw the stage rounding one of the many corners of the long grade. He did not intend to show himself lest he be taken for a bandit and rewarded with a bullet. When the stage had passed he would follow slowly and come alongside when it had stopped to change horses. The passengers would assume him to be a man from the neighborhood and above suspicion probably.

The stage was not a hundred feet distant when three shots rang out. Phillip saw the stage driver topple from his seat as one of the leaders fell dead and brought the other three horses tumbling about it. There was no command to hold up hands. Evidently some people as well concealed as he himself had shot without warning. A few seconds later three men jumped down from overhanging rocks and ran to the stage. All were armed with Winchesters. One was a big, heavy man unknown to Phillip. Another he had seen no later than the night he had met the dancer at the Lorelei. The third was John Ringo.

Kettle-belly Clancy and Curly Bill were Ringo's companions. No man on the stage put up any resistance. Since Ringo's first appearance in one of the sanguinary cattle wars that ravaged Texas in the early seventies he had been an outstanding figure among men. No deadlier shot ever held up a stage than he. There was a price on his head in California as well as Texas. Men could have slain him and reaped a rich reward but when it came to a showdown there was something about this leader

of desperate men that daunted the heart.

Owing no doubt to the great heat of the sun, the only woman passenger, the girl Effie Cooper, was inside. Here with baggage she had the interior to herself. The three men took little notice of her. They were too busy shaking down the men passengers.

Phillip hid his revolvers and rifle and he led his horse a few hundred yards back toward Summit Ridge where he was unseen around a bend. Then he cantered along until the coach came in sight.

Kettle-belly Clancy and Curly Bill kept their guns on the passengers but John Ringo faced the newcomer. Men who knew the arbitrary ways of these outlaws were amazed that the young man on the sorrel horse showed no fear. He dismounted and without looking up at the menacing Ringo ran to the coach calling out a girl's name.

Effie Cooper, hearing a strange voice calling her, dared to look up. A strange man was leaning through the window.

"I'm here from your sister," he said in a low tone. "You are to go to Tucson with me and wait her coming. Pretend not to be frightened. Call me Phil. If you don't I'll be shot and God knows what they'll do to you."

The girl, spurred by her terror, did as she was bid. She flung herself on him calling his name. Then she burst into tears.

John Ringo recognized Phillip but he was not yet sure of him. With a cold expression he immediately demanded an explanation.

"It's the girl I'm going to marry," said Phillip Wallis. "She's going to stay with Mr. Binstead until we're married. I came to meet her."

John Ringo was never brutal to women. He did not specially care for them. This was a good way out. Ere this Clancy and Curly Bill had quarreled over pretty girls and Effie was more than pretty. When the two men hotly disputed his decision to let the girl go, he stopped them quickly. "This man Wallis," he said, "saved my life and the life of the best horse I ever owned. I'm paying the debt back now." Ringo faced the girl and her rescuer. "I only pay once, Mr. Phillip Wallis from Connecticut, and this is the time. If you hear I am coming along a certain path, turn down another trail. You've got a good horse and it's not tired. Don't stop at Summit Ridge."

Down the steep grade with a strange girl sitting before him Phillip Wallis went jubilant. He had been very near death and he knew it. The two bandits who took their orders from Ringo had memorized his features. And they would never forgive him for taking the girl away. It was just as likely they would pursue. However good a horse may be, a double burden slackens his pace. The moonless darkness coming down promised immunity from the much greater danger to the girl—Indians.

She was asleep in his arms when he stopped at daybreak, his horse almost exhausted. As he looked at her he thought no cold photograph could do justice to her. She had wavy, light brown hair and blue eyes. There was upon her face none of that world-knowledge which was stamped upon the dancer from Phoenix.

Suddenly he put his hand over her mouth. The first thought that he had gone mad was banished when she saw that he was watching some horsemen on a distant trail.

"Don't make a sound," he whispered. "They mustn't see us."

## VII

AS the men came nearer Phillip could see they were United States cavalry officered by a captain. His first feeling of satisfaction at the sight gave way to a certain doubt. More than once on the long night ride he had wondered whether or not the passengers would think him an associate of the outlaws. He had spoken in a friendly fashion to Ringo. He had been allowed to depart unharmed with the girl. The story could easily be twisted. And these very troopers might be out to rescue a girl they believed abducted. Too much depended on reaching Tucson to take a chance.

Still sheltering from observation Phillip saw one of the riders place a placard on what seemed from the distance, a tree trunk. When they had gone and he saw their dust two miles away he crept to the tree to find it was the door of a small adobe

shack. On it he read the following disquieting words:

*BE CAREFUL*
*Geronimo is near by and has not yet surrendered.*
*Capt. Lawton.*

Phillip made his way back to the girl instantly. If the most dreaded of the Apaches, Geronimo, was on the warpath and near at hand it was most unlikely that the day would pass without peril for the white man and girl. It was imperative that they should lie absolutely quiet. The horse was grazing in a cup-shaped depression so close at hand that in the event of discovery Phillip could lift the girl to its back and make a desperate effort to escape.

"Effie," he said in a low voice. "Apaches are near. We are probably safe but we mustn't be seen or heard." She took the terrible news with extraordinary calmness. He did not know that she had conceived for him one of those sudden devotions which credits its heroes with almost superhuman powers. In his company she felt safe although as a girl who had lived West of the Rockies she knew what Indian warfare meant for women captives. Hours passed uneventfully. He was sleeping for a little when her keen eyes caught sight of a solitary rider.

"It's John Ringo," he said. "Wait here, I'll go and speak to him."

Ringo reined in his tired horse. "You again," he said. But this time he smiled. The weary eyes were no longer sullen. "I've come to find you. How's the girl?"

"Fine," he said, and listened to what Captain Lawton had written. "It's true they are near but it's not old Geronimo. He makes war on men. These are some renegade Apaches and one of my own men, at least he was formerly one of my men, set them on your trail. They are not two miles off. That's why I've come to help you. I'll explain later."

When his horse was hidden and he had gained the refuge where the girl was, he told his story. Kettle-belly Clancy, whose weakness was women, had been much taken with Effie. When Ringo reminded him he was a white man and not a half-breed ravisher there was a quarrel and the insubordinate bandit had left Curly Bill and Ringo. A few hours later Ringo found Clancy had offered gold to this marauding band of Apaches to track Phillip and the girl. Even now the Indians and Clancy were approaching. They would attack before dark. There were ten in all. "So," said John Ringo, concluding, "we have a stiff job on our hands."

Later he told Phillip if his ammunition ran out to keep two cartridges. One for the girl and one for himself.

"Is there any chance?" Effie asked when a smoke signal rose straight in the air a mile away and was answered by another behind their rock of refuge.

John Ringo nodded his head. "We can hold out," he said. "Boy," he whispered to Phillip, "This isn't the time to boast. Can you shoot?"

"Yes," said Phillip.

"Then we've a chance. Look, there they are!"

All Indians are cautious fighters in that they prefer to outnumber their enemies and take no unnecessary risks. They only rush a position when their foe's ammunition is exhausted or the fewness in numbers insures success. This is not cowardice but merely the way of fighting which best suits them. Ringo knew very well that two men with rifles could hold a long while against the encircling enemy.

The first Apache to be seen was the leader, Spotted Horse. He had broken from the government reservation, killed the agent in a quarrel and knew he had little hope of winning pardon. The eight Apaches with him were fellow renegades.

"They haven't seen us yet," Phillip whispered. "They may not know of this place."

Ringo did not answer. He leaned forward and picked up what looked like a curled oakleaf. Apaches do not smoke pipes. They use a native tobacco rolled in oak leaves. Here was a proof that some members of the dreaded tribe had been here not so long ago.

"They know," said Ringo, "they're riding around us now." Suddenly Phillip's rifle barked and an Indian who had shown between two boulders for a split second toppled over. John Ringo smiled. "Yes, boy," he drawled. "You can shoot. Wild Bill Hickok couldn't have done prettier work."

In truth John Ringo was not as easy in

his mind as he pretended to be. Kettle-belly Clancy was a skilled fighter. While the Indians might be riding around drawing imperceptibly nearer, Clancy, with his white man's courage would be creeping closer. Despite his vast bulk he could move silently. The affair of the girl had been the cause of a quarrel which had been brewing for a long time. It suited Ringo very well that a boot-hill should receive his lieutenant.

The only danger was that from one of the mounds of equal height, or perhaps a little higher, Clancy might snipe at them. Indians are not good shots. Few in the Territory were better with a rifle than Clancy.

Ringo would much rather have been in the middle of a plain than here in this boulder strewn hill top. In the level land the superior marksmanship of the white men would tell for the Indian galloping around on his pony is an indifferent shot. Here they were admirably placed for the Apaches to creep in on them. No human being can take cover as the Indian. Ringo knew that out of range their horses were tethered. All he could do was to endure the dreadful waiting. Presently there would be a rush. Then the Indians would fall back and keep on this sort of warfare until their enemies were killed or wounded. He had been in a hundred encounters with Indians and their tactics rarely varied. One of their schemes was to make their foes expend ammunition needlessly. Many an emigrant band crossing the continent in their covered wagons had allowed themselves to be panic stricken and shot wildly instead of waiting until the enemy was within killing range.

Ringo looked with interest at the two and did not doubt that they were engaged. He saw that Phillip's hand closed over the small white hand of the girl.

The ping of a rifle made him shift his position. The bullet passed through the rim of his hat, a wide Stetson. Another followed it. Kettle-belly Clancy had found the range. There was no chance of getting the marksman. Between his vantage point and their own retreat were war-painted Apaches. Ringo made up his mind quickly. "We'd better get out. Let the girl ride behind you. I'll go first."

Into the band of Indians who had no idea such a bold manueuver would be executed the two horsemen dashed. At such close range the white men used their revolvers. Two of the eight Apaches dropped. The rest when they were recovered from the shock, came thundering down the mountain after them. In the eyry to which he had climbed with such difficulty, Clancy was raging that his victims had gone. If John Ringo escaped there was not a square mile in the Territory that would be safe. As Ringo had surmised the horses were hidden. It would take some time for them to reach them. With average luck they were safe from the band. Spotted Horse excited by the prospect of reward might follow with Clancy. Their horses, former mounts of U. S. cavalry scouts were better than the others. Clancy at all events would have no superstitious fears of attacking in the night darkness. His only safety was to kill his former chief, the man of moods and silences.

Spotted Horse and Kettle-belly followed even as Ringo had expected. The Indian had ridden with Billy the Kid too often to have the fears of his fellow as to night raiding. He had been laughed out of them. Ringo and Phillip stopped when their horses were exhausted. Not so Spotted Horse and his companion. There is an old saying on the plains: "A white man will abandon a horse as broken down and utterly unable to go farther; a Mexican will then mount him and ride fifty miles; an Indian will mount him and ride for a week."

Spotted Horse as an Apache had no trouble in following the trail. To his keen eyes it was as though guide posts were placed at every yard. Clancy followed secure in the knowledge that the fleeing men could not escape. But he was not easy in his mind entirely. It was not like John Ringo to run from equal numbers. Clancy supposed it must be because the stranger could not shoot. Anyone could have killed an Indian on foot with a revolver as this young man had done. Ringo was fleeing because so far as fighting was concerned he was one against two.

But it was not until the sun had risen next day that the Indian saw the girl. She was seated on a fallen tree that capped a mound. Nobody else was in sight. Had he been fighting Indians he would have

suspected a trap. But white men fought differently he had found. They were no doubt at the spring half a mile away believing themselves unpursued.

In that moment of triumph Clancy's rights were forgotten. Spotted Horse uttered his war whoop, brandished his weapon and dashed toward the white girl. Clancy, spurring his more heavily laden beast was close behind. He had just a glance of John Ringo before his former superior's bullet put an end to his misspent life. Down the rocky trail went the outlaw's horse. Clancy's gross body was dragged by a stirrup leather until it broke. Then he dropped, hardly in the semblance of a human being, out of sight.

Spotted Horse was luckier than he deserved. Phillip Wallis leapt at him and pulled him to the ground. Never had the Apache been in the grip of a man so strong. Lifting him over his head Phillip hurled the Apache down the steep mountainside. Fortunately for the Indian his body struck a projecting tree which broke his fall. Senseless and bruised he fell to a ledge beneath.

"I don't believe you've killed him," said John Ringo, peering over the edge. There's nothing like a forty-five in dealing with Apaches. They won't bother us any more, that's certain. We are bad medicine for them. The stage passes here in an hour and I don't see any reason why you shouldn't get safely to Tucson."

"Where are you going?" Phillip demanded.

"Home. My home is in the Dragoon Mountains."

"But the Indians," the girl cried.

John Ringo shook his head.

"Years ago in San Jose my horoscope was cast by an old woman who never made a mistake. She foresaw disgrace. It came. Danger. My life is filled with it. Unhappiness." He shrugged his shoulders. "That also came true. But she said no man, Indian, trooper, sheriff or outlaw could kill me. So far it has come true. Good-bye. You've got a man there."

He waved his hand and rode away. What the astrologer told John Ringo when he was known by another name was true. Not long after this, in the Sulphur Springs Valley, John Ringo lost his mount. It had raced away to freedom leaving his owner in a waterless plain helpless. His boots had been tied to the saddle of the runaway horse. What trooper or bandit or Apache could not accomplish, the cruel desert did. John Ringo realizing he was doomed, and after wandering for hours with bleeding feet died by his own hand.

## VIII

WHEN the news came through to Tombstone that the stage had been held up and Effie Cooper abducted by outlaws Bauer's anger knew no bounds. The hold that he felt he had secured over her sister Gloria, the dancer, was gone. It was true she remained a prisoner under his roof. But Bauer was now so crazily in love with her that he felt he could not bear the idea that she would leave him.

The account of the robbery was confused, each passenger having a different version. None had known Wallis by sight and the mention of a fourth man was thought to be merely one of the lesser lights of Ringo's band. Even Gloria, when the news was told her, was doubtful. The fourth member might have been Phillip. But if so how could he be on such friendly terms with the merciless outlaw chief, that he-wolf whom all law-abiding men dreaded? Had she who had fooled men for so long been made a fool of by this quiet steady-eyed stranger?

Her only confidant was a Mexican woman who was employed to clean the place, an elderly woman, and to her she dared say little. Gloria no longer danced. Bauer's furious jealousy would not permit it.

Bars had been placed outside her windows. She could not escape. It was at night when the dance hall was running at full blast that she heard a tapping on the pane. She looked out cautiously to see Phillip Wallis in the shadow below.

"Effie is safe in Tucson," he whispered. "When will you be ready? I've got a horse for you and some men's clothes."

"I can't get out," she answered. "I'm barred in.

"That won't make any difference," he said. "Can you be ready in an hour? I'll pitch the clothes in the window." He threw the bundle up.

"All right," she said. "In less than

an hour I shall be ready and waiting."

It chanced that Bauer that night had been warned the tall stranger was back in town. He had been seen riding into the Camp House. It was dating from the time of the stranger's conversation with Gloria that her manner had changed and she had refused to speak to him. A libertine like Bauer would naturally be savagely jealous of a better looking and younger rival. He fancied, while inflamed by drink and rage, that men were laughing at him. He saw offense where none was intended and he blamed the dancer from Phoenix for it. Was he, Herman Bauer, whose will had been supreme so long to be defied by a dancing girl he had hired?

When he burst into Gloria's room he thought at first the slim man staring at him was some unknown rival. Then he recognized her. The girl shrugged her shoulders. She knew the game was up. The window was open and Bauer saw that she had been about to escape. He rushed to it and thrust his bullet head between the steel bars and looked into the alley. He saw Phillip Wallis below, slinking in the alley, ready to aid and abet the girl. His hand went to his holster but he was too slow, for the girl pulled out his revolver and tossed it to the ground below. It fell on a heap of rubbish and made no sound. Phillip was not even aware of this bit of drama.

Bauer turned on Gloria in a burst of rage that banished all his former affection. He wanted to get those thick heavy hands of his about her white throat and choke the sneering smile into the agony of death. Her training had made her lithe and active. He could not reach her.

In the alley Wallis went about his preparations unaware of what was happening in Gloria's room. The blare of the dance hall music, the loud talk of the men drowned all other sounds. He placed a short ladder against the wall, ascended a few steps of it and looped a heavy rope at the base of the bars. He did not ascend high enough to look into the room. He had little time and could waste none of it.

Then he hitched the rope to the two saddle horses waiting. As the horses made a step forward there was a sudden movement of the rope which caught Bauer's eye. He ceased in his pursuit of the girl. He believed that Wallis was climbing up the rope. With a roar of rage the crazed man rushed to the window and again thrust his massive head through the bars. It was his desire to crush the life of his rival with his bare hands.

But there was no climber. Instead Wallis was on horseback. Came a sudden shaking of the bars. They bent inward catching the bull neck in a grip that nothing human could break. Then the horses were urged forward and the bars were pulled clear out. And with them came the gross body of Herman Bauer. He fell to the alley with a crash.

Wallis having no idea that the man had been in the upper room was staggered for the moment. Then he saw how unconsciously he had been fate's instrument in bringing retribution.

Owing to a sudden fight in the saloon the climax of a poker dispute, none heard what was going on in the alley. Wallis and the girl in her male disguise rode unmolested out of the town. She was thrilled with excitement. The death of Bauer at once gratified and alarmed her.

"Will there be a posse after us?" she asked anxiously.

"Not yet a while," he answered and cautioned her not to speak lest her voice be recognized. There were many dangers ahead but he had faith in his stars.

## IX

THE news of Bauer's death reached Tucson long before the two riders arrived. Kenner and Dunham talked the matter over with Scotty Maxwell and rejoiced. They knew well enough that if the scheme they had, to send Three-Finger Harry Chapin as Delegate to Congress from Arizona Territory, went through, Bauer would have to be taken care of and there was a disposition now to keep the spoils to the fewest number possible.

Kenner was about to sell out his immense herds. Buyers were anxious to get his stock. He chuckled as he thought of it. The steers and horses he was selling were descendants in every case of rustled stock. Never in his life had Big Kenner paid a cent for bull or mare. For the

last few years he had been more circumspect. The freer days of the seventies were gone by and except for the wide open mining centers, the Territory was beginning to show signs of the coming law and order.

With this ready capital he and Dunham would make such purchases as to allow them to forget the uncertainties of mining and the fluctuating price of beef. As powers in politics they would be on the inside concerning the Arizona forest reserves and lands not yet thrown open. Mining and the cattle business paled beside the fortunes to be made in these new fields. Dunham and Kenner were anxious to get rid of the men who had been associated with their early life. The death of Pedro Pimeria they welcomed. Shorty Hawes was not long to be their pensioner. Scotty was drinking himself to death and had already recovered from two attacks of delirium tremens. Faro Jim Steen would always be useful. He was not ambitious and still retained his skill with a revolver. Three-Finger Harry once their delegate would be clay in their hands. The leadership therefore devolved upon one of the two. Dunham was the craftier. At present he was not nearly as wealthy as was supposed. An Eastern financier, with a spectacular partner named Jim Fiske, was making millions out of watered Erie stock. For Dunham's dollars Dunham received mainly the water. This he did not want known lest his prestige among the financiers of the Territory should be lost.

When Kenner's immense herds of horses and cattle were sold he could get all he wanted, for Kenner believed in his friend.

Kenner's ranch was almost on the Mexican border. It was conveniently situated for flight, if flight were necessary. More than once Kenner had crossed the line a few lengths ahead of the deputies. This range, the most valuable in the county, had timber, water all the year, and good grass. Kenner had compelled a former owner to transfer it to him and when the thing was legally effective had shot the unfortunate who in his cups called Big Kenner a thief.

Kenner was the first of the big ranchers to make terms with the marauding Apaches. He allowed them what beef they needed. In return they informed him of any outlaw plans against him and fought any rival bands. This unusual arrangement paid him twenty times over for the cows he lost to the Indians. The Indians found in him the quickest purchaser for rustled stock.

All these things Phillip Wallis had known before he took the dangerous trip to Tombstone when he had brought Gloria to her sister. He had only a few words with Effie but they were enough to send him away singing. Assuredly the Connecticut farmer folk would not have recognized in him now the dour, hard-faced boy who had been so unpopular among them.

Effie's shy confusion was not lost upon her experienced sister. Gloria was furious. She did not want Effie to marry for years. When she did, Gloria wanted to pick a slavish and adoring husband for her. As a woman Gloria admired Phillip Wallis. But she resented the fact that he had told her nothing of his history. Thinking the matter over she came to the conclusion that this mysterious unknown was not the man for a brother-in-law.

"It's my belief," she said, "that he's in league with John Ringo and Curly Bill. You say Ringo came to help you against the Indians. That proves it, for Ringo wouldn't move a finger to save anyone who wasn't worth something to him."

"Oh, Gloria," Effie said, her eyes flashing. "That's hateful." Then she smiled a little. "After all I don't think you know much about men."

"Me?" Gloria laughed unpleasantly. "I know everything about them."

Phillip knew that he was riding into danger again. He had a very definite idea in mind. It evolved from a story his grandfather had told him of how, years ago, near Fort Davis, Texas, almost every horse of four companies had been stolen in face of a strong guard, by a half dozen Apaches. The same thing had happened to the baggage mules of the 6th Infantry at Bear Creek, Kansas, just ten years ago.

Entering Tombstone at night he made his way to the Camp House, the center of gossip and information. It was the resort mainly of unmonied workers, miners who had gambled their earnings away and "broke" cattlemen. The only man of the crowd which had been there a fort-

night back was an elderly teamster who had once ridden the Pony Express. He was a small man as all these riders had been and he knew Indians thoroughly and had his own opinion of them. This he expressed when Phillip hinted he would like to meet Spotted Horse.

"They are the most onsartainest varmints in all creation, and I reckon tha'r not mor'n half human. You never seed a human after you'd fed him and treated him to the best fixins in your lodge, jest turn round and steal all your horses, or ary other thing he could lay his hands on. No, not adzactly. He would feel kinder grateful and ask you to spread a blanket in his lodge if you ever passed that a-way. But the Indian he don't care shucks for you and is ready to do you a heap of mischief as soon as he quits your feed."

This was no news to Phillip Wallis. But he learned what he wanted to know. Spotted Horse had been seen in the Mexican gambling shacks a mile out of the town. The deputies did not yet know it for the reason that the town as a whole was not amiably inclined toward the faction that was running it. The way of informers was hard.

Spotted Horse had gambled all Clancy's money away. He had that passion for whiskey which is the Indian's curse. It was not an Indian brave on the warpath who left the Mexican shack late one night. He was that helpless thing, an Apache without a horse. His mount had been lost in the wretched gambling hell he had just quitted.

There was no chance for him to whip out his knife when he saw Phillip Wallis. The white man's fist felled him to the ground. While he was for a few seconds unconscious the white man tied him. Then Spotted Horse was lifted onto the sorrel horse he had coveted and taken toward the mountains. To Spotted Horse this meant he was to be killed, perhaps with torture. At least Indians can die without whimpering. Struggle was useless.

He found himself presently in an arch of rocks that made a sort of cave. The white man seated himself on a boulder and addressed him. Spotted Horse could hardly believe what he heard. He was offered freedom, money and the opportunity to do one of those spectacular deeds which could go down in tribal history.

Eagerly he told the white man that he could gather together a dozen of these outlaws like himself. But to do the thing that was asked of them they must be well mounted.

Phillip rode back to the Camp House well pleased. Indians knew as well as white men on which side their bread was buttered. There was no fear of treachery yet.

His second errand was far more dangerous. He was to seek one, a mere boy in years, who had shed more blood in his outlaw career than any single bandit in the turbulent Southwest. The old Pony Express rider had confided in Phillip that he knew where Billy the Kid was hiding. He would not inform on him because if he did, his life would not be worth a rap.

Billy the Kid had been operating mainly in Texas and New Mexico. So devastating were his activities, that the Canadian River Cattle Association engaged their own force of deputies to hunt him down. Finally through the skill of Apache scouts —Indians operating on the side of the law —he was put in jail at Lincoln, New Mexico.

Here he managed to break into a room containing firearms and secured a shotgun and a revolver. He at once proceeded to kill two deputies, Ollinger and Bell by name. A third deputy was compelled to get him a horse. He rode away leaving the little town terrorized.

New Mexico being too hot for him he rode into Arizona. Here he was hiding until he got his gang of cut-throats together. He looked upon Arizona as a place to clean up before dropping down into Old Mexico where he proposed to retire. With Mexican and Pueblo Indian blood in him he could pass for one or the other as he chose. It was this desperate man, a dead-shot and utterly conscienceless whom Phillip Wallis wanted.

It was starlight when Phillip crept to where the Kid was sleeping in the mouth of an abandoned mine shaft. The Kid who had smiled so often at the fear he inspired in others when he commanded them to throw their hands up was fairly caught. What rage surged in his brain he fought down. The face of his foe was a strange one. Two revolvers and a long

knife were taken from him. Then his captor sat down and faced him.

"I'm not going to kill you or turn you over to the sheriff," said Phillip. "I'm here to offer you a big opportunity to make money. You'd have shot me if I hadn't held you up like this."

Billy the Kid, feline, delicately made, showed his white teeth in a grin. Most certainly he would have shot the American just as cheerfully as he had shot two American deputies a week earlier.

"You're a new kind of Gringo," he exclaimed. "What is it you want?"

In answer Wallis tossed him the weapons he had taken from him. He clutched a gun greedily and leveled it at the calm, fearless man who was smiling. "What's to prevent my doing it now?"

"Curiosity for one thing," said Phillip. "Put up your gun and listen to me."

As he talked the shifty black eyes of Billy the Kid grew large with wonderment and cupidity.

"Dio Mio!" he cried. "Of a certainty I can do what you ask. Do you mean that you do not expect to share any part of the loot."

"I want none of it," Phillip said. "When you are ready with horses and men send word to me at the office of Mr. Binstead, attorney, at Tucson. Meanwhile here is five hundred dollars in gold." Carelessly he tossed a canvas bag to the penniless outlaw. "If you run out of doing what I ask I can't stop you. But for every dollar there you can make a hundred."

"The señor does not know me," said Billy the Kid with a gesture. "I am like you Americans, I want the big pickings. Yes, I shall not fail."

Phillip Wallis went back to the Camp House well content. As soon as it was light he pulled out with three other horsemen who were taking the same dangerous road. He resisted the temptation to send a line to his grandfather. Pedro and Herman were dead but greater menaces than these remained. In fancy he saw himself returning to the desolate farm in Connecticut and saying, "I have done what I set out to do." He was young enough to feel a certain pleasure in such a thing. He did not think that the old man was waiting anxiously for a word to tell him his only relative was still alive.

## X

SCOTTY MAXWELL reported to his principals that the unknown stranger who had attracted his attention at the Palace was now a close friend of Binstead and even visited at his house. Dunham and Kenner were not interested in the somewhat shabby young man until Binstead in one of his infrequent visits to the Palace bar introduced Phillip to "Colonel" Maxwell.

"Mr. Wallis," he said, "is an Eastern man anxious to get into the cattle business."

Maxwell took Phillip's well worn clothes in at a glance. He supposed the stranger's ambition was to ride the range at thirty dollars a month. He was not cordial.

"I'll ask my friend Kenner to give him a job," Maxwell replied.

Phillip Wallis smiled a little. "I wasn't looking for that sort of a job. I wanted to buy a ranch and stock it with the best I could get." As per arrangement with Binstead, Wallis nodded and strolled off.

"He looks like buying a ranch!" Maxwell commented.

"I don't know," Binstead said. "I know he has fifty thousand on deposit at the Bank of Arizona, Joe Brandenstein doesn't talk to him like you do, and Joe's a director and a pretty big man."

Binstead had a reputation for speaking the truth and being conservative. He said the stranger had fifty thousand to spend and that meant he had.

Phillip was amused when the pompous Maxwell presently came over to him. "You can't be too careful out here in the Territory," he said. "Binstead vouches for you. That's enough for me. This is a lucky day for you and I'll tell you why as we sip a julep."

He poured into the younger man's ear the staggering bargain rates at which he could buy Kenner's steers and horses.

"I'd like to look them over," said Wallis.

"In confidence," said Maxwell, for he did not want to make any error and raise false hopes in his employer's heart, "In confidence have you really fifty thousand dollars?"

"In the Bank of Arizona I have only that but I can draw on another hundred

thousand if the stock is what I want. I'm not such a fool as to come out here advertising the fact that I'm wealthy. I dress like this and go about and listen to people because it pays me. I'm making no promises to buy because I may not like Kenner's way of doing business but I'm prepared to go any time next week." He nodded without too much affability and strode away.

That night he dined with Dunham in the finest house in Tucson. The dining-room was lavishly furnished and much silver was to be seen. The lights were shaded so that the man he had always thought of as One-Eye Dunham and the Indians called "Powder Face" was not conspicuous. Big Kenner was the fourth guest. Maxwell was there, too, and in the background the bodyguard busied himself with the drinks.

It was not pleasant to break bread with four men who had been guilty of the murder of his father and mother but to refuse an invitation might have seemed suspicious. Wallis spoke little.

An arrangement was made to visit the distant ranch when it was convenient for Phillip Wallis to go. They were not to know that his visit was to be determined by the Apache Spotted Horse and the dreaded Billy the Kid. They regarded his hesitation as justified when the spending of so much capital was involved. To press him might make him back out.

Comparing notes when he had gone none of the four admitted liking him. "He's got as cold a look as you, Charlie," Kenner remarked to Dunham. "He seemed to be watching me as if he wanted to find out what I was thinking about. Made me damn uncomfortable."

"Puts me in mind of someone I used to know," Dunham mused. "I can't recollect who, but I must have hated him because this feller gets my back up directly he looks at me."

"What do we care?" Maxwell laughed. "We know he has the money."

"I wish I could remember who he reminds me of," Dunham repeated. "Did you see how he looked at us? There was a sheriff over at Deming once who thought he was going to hang, who had eyes like him."

"Hell!" Kenner cried. "The dead's dead! Leave it lie. We need the money and we ain't aiming to trim him." Kenner disliked references to the old days.

Three nights later a thin, bent Mexican woman asked to see the Senor Wallis. Expecting her to be the messenger of one of the two desperadoes he had engaged, he went outside. It was Billy the Kid. Everything was in readiness. So that there should be no delay he had seen Spotted Horse whose plans were now perfected. All Phillip Wallis had to do was to visit the ranch. He need not warn them he was coming. Billy the Kid had spies who would miss nothing.

Gloria and Effie were boarding with an old Kansas woman. She had taken to the younger Cooper girl at first sight but was a little doubtful of Gloria. Gloria sensing this had toned down somewhat. She had become convinced through Mr. Binstead that Phillip was honest and able to take care of her sister. It had been a bitter struggle; but as the child was so completely absorbed in Phillip fighting against it was useless.

The night before the Kenner party was to go to the border ranch he called to say good-bye.

"Phil," Effie cried, "you are going into some danger. I feel it." There had been a certain gravity in his manner, a new seriousness she had not seen before. To her he was mysterious beyond any human being she had ever met. She had witnessed his coolness and courage. She knew that he had some mission of danger and daring of which he would never speak. Also, she had found that he was truthful. "If you loved me," she cried, "you would give it up."

"If I am to be worthy of your love," he said, "I cannot give it up."

From her window in the early morning she saw a cavalcade ride past. There was Phillip on his sorrel horse. Dunham and Kenner rode fine bays, offspring of a famous horse stolen from an English syndicate which had the great Badminton ranch in California years before. "Colonel" Maxwell grunting somewhat from the unaccustomed saddle bestrode a big black horse up to weight. Behind came the bodyguard. Every man was a fine rider and not one of them but—had justice ruled—should have been strung up a score of

years before and been bleached bones by now.

Phillip had no feeling that he was committing crimes in contemplating the ruin of these men. They had sinned against innumerable men and women. It was to be his lot to punish them.

The great Kenner ranch was not reached for two days. In fertile, watered valleys it lay, shaded and rich. When Kenner stole he picked his loot well. During the heat of the first mid-day the party rested by a water hole. The road led by the side of a mountain which was as sheer as though it had been cut by a gigantic axe. Phillip could see that a narrow path had been cut along its side rising from the road level on one side, ascending five hundred feet and then coming again to the road. When he asked the reason he was told that where the road now ran had been a treacherous quicksand where innumerable cattle and men had died. The rocky path had been cut a hundred years before and here the quicksands had been filled in with rock had been the only safe trail.

"They call it Wild Bill Cassity's Leap," said Maxwell who had been drinking and was communicative.

Phillip's attention was instantly aroused at the name. This was the man his grandfather had killed. "Why?" he demanded. He saw that Kenner and Dunham were frowning. Evidently they did not want Maxwell to talk.

"Cassity rode over that way once. He had a great white horse that he took from the cavalry. Half way up he met another feller who'd been laying for him. Neither one of 'em could turn around. Ledge isn't more than two feet wide in places. One of 'em had to go. Other fellow was on a sorrel like yours. He struck spurs into it and rode for Bill. Both horses reared and struck at each other but the sorrel won. I seen it," said Maxwell less careful of his speech. "I knowed 'em both. The 'Doc' was certainly a game man." Maxwell stopped suddenly. He remembered what followed and it was not creditable either to him or to Dunham. They had run away. Well, they lived to tell of it twenty years later. Cassity was dead and the Apaches had no doubt scalped Sillaw. "Sillaw's dead years back," he concluded.

"A curious name, Sillaw," said Phillip. "I don't think I ever heard it before."

"I hope Hell's full of 'em," snapped Kenner. He could never get over the chill that the name brought even after these years. That was one good deed Mangus Colorado did, he reflected. "Don't listen to the colonel. Them deputies are always talking about the old days."

The ranch house was built almost as a stockade against Indians. Its earlier owners had been besieged many times. But not during Kenner's reign had there been any molestation. He satisfied himself that all was well as soon as the party arrived. A round-up was to be made so that the immense herds could be seen without trouble. Meanwhile the resources of the house were at Phillip's service. It was thought to be only the reasonable request of a buyer to be allowed to ride around the place. He went alone. He saw that the mountain ranges ran North and South. These ranges narrowed somewhat on the South or Mexican side. Far away in the mountains Kenner had men stationed ready at the first intimation to call their fellows together to repel attack. These men of Kenner's were of the lowest type. His ranch was sanctuary for the lawless.

Already Phillip could see them at work driving in the horses and cattle. He rode to the Southern boundary of the range toward Old Mexico. It was here he thought he might find some sign of Spotted Horse. He was not mistaken for the Apache came up stealthily and reported all was well. He bore a message from Billy the Kid. Billy had found two of his own band on Kenner's payroll waiting there till things were safe for them to join him. They would be of great assistance.

When Phillip returned to the ranch he found some other buyers from Bisbee. Kenner was in high spirits. The stock was in good condition and these men from Bisbee way were wealthy. Particularly John Westell whose prize Hereford Bull Kenner had stolen twelve years before. It pleased Kenner to think that Westell would buy back the descendants of the great Hereford.

## XI

THE rounded-up horses were not put in a corral. Kenner had no corral big enough for such herds. They were driven

into a natural amphitheatre a mile from the ranch house. Each side was protected by precipitous rocks. To the North was a heavy wire fence. To the South there were the Kenner cowboys. In another such valley were the great herds of cattle. The horses were to be sold first.

Kenner was determined to get his buyers into a good humor and provided meat and drink in large quantities. In buying stock in large numbers no individual inspection is possible. Phillip made an offer for a large bunch of horses when the interruption came.

Thundering down from the Northern end of the range, the end that had been fenced, came a score of riderless horses. As they approached the thousands these larger numbers, already excited by the round-up, pricked up their ears and stamped the shaking earth.

"Wild horses," Kenner cried anxiously. "By God! they'll stampede the bunch if the boys are not careful." As he spoke the galloping wild horses entered the herd and the whole great mass turned South to Old Mexico. It was impossible to stop them but Kenner had good cowboys and Old Mexico was ten miles distant from where he stood.

When the herd was five hundred yards from him and his group of amazed buyers, he was horrified to see an Indian rise upon the back of each of the horses supposed to be wild and riderless. Their war whoops completed the panic. Kenner knew now that there was nothing to stop the herd. Two hundred thousand dollars was galloping away!

He turned for his horse. He would do what he could. But his horse was not there. Nor were any of the horses that had been hitched a few rods away from the mound on which the buyers stood. One of Spotted Horse's men had seen to that. Even Phillip's sorrel was gone.

At the ranch worse news awaited them. On the door was a piece of paper with a knife thrust through it to hold it in place.

*"You will find your cattle at Casas Grandes where you dare not come because you killed the Mayor. I shall travel fast. To take from so great a thief as you is the best thing I have ever done.* *BILLY the KID."*

Toiling over the baking land Kenner, Dunham, the exhausted Maxwell and the others went. The bars of the corrals were down. Not a head was to be seen. Only a cloud of dust in the distance showed the rest of Kenner's vanishing fortunes. And Dunham as he gazed knew that he was ruined. The options he held on timber land could not be taken up. Three-Finger Harry Chapin would never be Delegate to Congress. Instead of success there was inescapable ruin.

Kenner knew nothing of the state of Dunham's finances. He knew only that Dunham wanted a temporary loan from him which he would be glad to supply. If the stock was never recovered he supposed he could always live on One-Eye Dunham. When the first bitter shock of the disappointment was over and the buyers gone on horses left over from the round-up he voiced this.

"I'm as broke as you are," snarled Dunham.

"Then you wanted me to sell out or you'd be ruined. That's a hell of a thing to do." Within ten seconds a quarrel flared up between the two who had been allies so many years. Kenner was so much inflamed by liquor and loss as to care little what he said. Although they drew their guns simultaneously, Kenner was quicker. One-Eye Dunham, a bullet in that mottled forehead sank to the ground dead. Kenner was sobered on the instant. A voice startled him. He looked into the eyes of Phillip Wallis.

"A pretty good shot," commented the younger man.

Kenner did not stop to ask why Wallis had returned. It was enough to know someone of integrity had witnessed his crime. Kenner thought and acted quickly. He flung himself upon Wallis and called aloud for help. Maxwell and Steen came running in.

"This feller's just killed Dunham," Kenner cried. "Tried to get me but I was too quick."

So it was by an unexpected trick of fate, Phillip Wallis found himself bound and weaponless in the midst of his enemies.

These same enemies had a council of war. Although they were satisfied that Wallis was financially responsible, they all agreed that he gave the impression of be-

ing against them which was borne out by this attack on Dunham.

"We'll question him," Kenner said. "If he doesn't tell we'll torture him till he does. I've seen the way the Indians work it."

"That will come out at Tucson. He'll inform."

Kenner laughed. "You're getting soft-hearted, Scotty, as well as soft-muscled. He won't get to Tucson. We've had misfortune ever since he came. Bring him in Jim."

Faro Jim Steen brought in the prisoner. Merciless eyes met him. Kenner had to have him put out of the way to insure his own safety. The other two were under Kenner's orders from force of habit. Kenner himself was maddened by his loss, by the failure of his hopes and his stupidity in killing the man who might have pulled him out of the hole. His naturally savage nature demanded blood. Phillip Wallis was to be the victim.

Phillip knew that he had no chance. What was law and order to such men as these? He had ridden back to the ranch in order to satisfy himself that the ruin of Kenner and Dunham was complete. It had been his first unwise move since he had set about their downfall.

"I've got this to say," he began, "Kenner killed Dunham and put the blame on me." This explanation had already occurred to the other two ex-outlaws but it made no difference. The king was dead; long live the king. To them Kenner was easier to deal with and a mere matter of shooting did not shock them. Dunham had, of late, grown too despotic.

"You're on trial," Kenner said, not deigning to deny the charge. "We'll give you five minutes to put up a defense."

"And after that?"

"The court will be merciful. It will allow you to select your own grave so long as it isn't more than a half mile from the ranch." His sneering smile passed. He had been before too many sheriffs to be in doubt as to the procedure.

Phillip Wallis saw there was no escape. Effie's fears for his safety had been true warnings but in his pride and strength he had laughed at them. It was very hard to die now that love had come into the life which had held so little happiness. And there was a sense of failure which depressed him. He had not accomplished what he had come to do. Pedro Pimeria was dead. Herman Bauer was dead. Dunham lay still in the next room. His grandfather had been right in believing he had sent the boy on an errand which could end only in death.

"I did not kill Dunham," he began slowly, "but it was I, all the same, who brought him to his death." He saw that he had instantly arrested the attention of his judges. "You remember Pedro Pimeria? I see you do. Well, I killed him. And Herman Bauer, who used to ride with you. I killed him, too." He looked into Kenner's face with his steady, unfathomable eyes. "You would have been next. I plotted your ruin and I have succeeded. It was Spotted Horse who stampeded your horses. I planned the whole thing. Billy the Kid was in my employ for the time being." He did not flinch when Kenner buffeted him in the face. His hands were tied he could not defend himself.

"Wait a bit," said Maxwell, pulling Kenner into his seat again. "We've got to find out more before we start on that."

"You were on the list," said Wallis, "and Steen, Hawes and Chapin. Romo Clementez and Juan Ensenada were hanged at Camp Bowie. You won't need for friends in Hell, Kenner."

"What are you doing this for?"

"Because of what you and your band did one night twenty years ago when they killed a man and his wife and jumped their claim. He was from New England and she was of the Camarillo family of California. I see you remember."

"Who told you about it?" Kenner asked. It was plain this crime was one which awoke something disagreeable in his memory.

"I was there," said Phillip.

"You lie," said Kenner roughly, "there wasn't nothing there but a baby."

"I am that baby."

A light broke on Kenner and Maxwell. Now they knew why they had feared and hated this stranger at sight. He was a Sillaw, grandson of that old fighter from whose vengeance the Apaches had delivered him. Another reason why this last of the dreaded breed should die. Kenner wasted no time. He looked meaningly at

his associates. "What is your verdict."

"Death," they cried as in one voice.

The sentence could awake no plea for mercy from the prisoner. Steen undid the bonds that bound him. Phillip was one against three armed men, all anxious to kill him. He had reminded them of one of the desperate deeds of their earlier years, a deed of which each man was ashamed in secret. He had accomplished Kenner's ruin. He had brought about the ruin of each one dependent on Dunham's crafty brain. There was no mercy in the hearts of any of them.

The place Phillip Wallis was to die was in the little hollow behind the ranch house. Here he would have for company the man who built the ranch and many more who had contested Kenner's way. Not a ranch hand was to be seen. Some had followed the stampeded horses and were even now dead at the hands of Spotted Horse's followers. Others had thrown in their lot with Billy the Kid and were crossing the line into Old Mexico.

Since shooting was more or less an honorable and easy death, the three determined that Phillip Wallis should swing from the bough of a tree. So they tied his hands again. The rope was already around his neck when the shadow of a horseman crossed the open space by the tree.

The horseman was behind Phillip, who was facing his captors, his face grim, determined not to give them the satisfaction of seeing him weaken at the thought of the death they planned for him. He could not, therefore, see who the mounted man might be, whether he was friend or foe. But he realized from the expressions on the faces of the three killers that it could not be a friend. It was as though they were staring at a ghost, and it was evident that they had completely forgotten him. They stood transfixed, and Maxwell let the rope slip through his nerveless fingers to the ground.

From where he stood Phillip could only see a look of utmost horror come into the faces of the men who had only a few seconds before been cursing him. It was as though they looked upon death. The man with the hempen noose about his throat saw Kenner reach for his gun. And as he did so a bullet from the unknown's revolver struck him over an eye and he dropped. Then Jim Steen fell. Maxwell was already fleeing. A third shot dropped him.

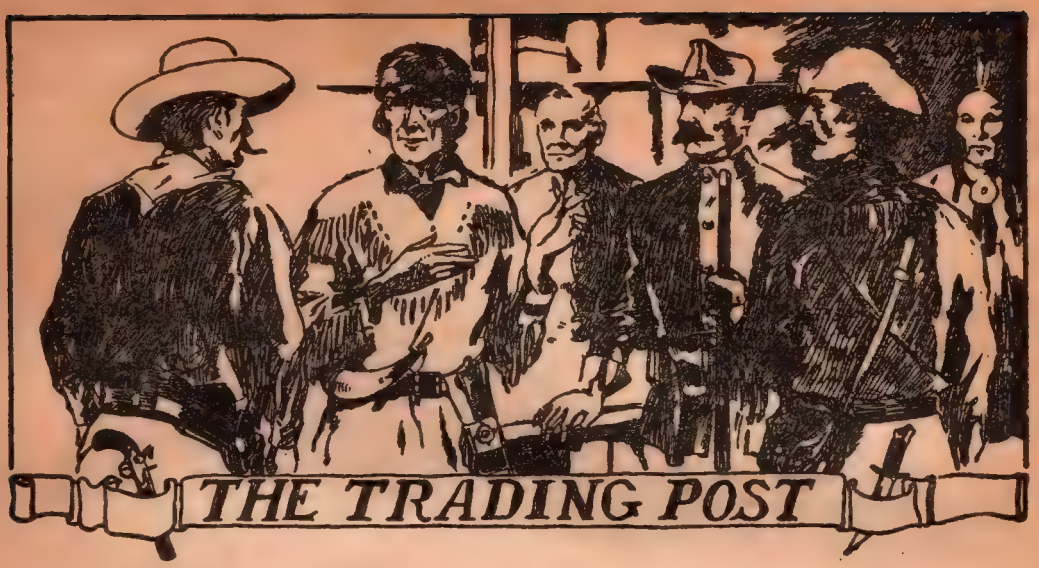
In these confused moments Phillip wondered more than anything else why men used to violence and crime should look as though they had seen something so terror-compelling that it showed on their hardened and crime-graved faces.

They died, these three who had deserved so much more cruel a fate, startled beyond belief at the fate which had overtaken them. Thus fear had made them hesitate a moment too long in drawing their usually ready weapons.

For as they grouped themselves about the tree of death ready to hang their victim, it seemed to them that the elder Sillaw had risen from his unquiet grave. There he appeared, as in life they remembered him sitting on a great sorrel horse —the horse that had ridden Cassity over the mountain precipice. Motionless, speechless, he had looked at those whose lives twenty years before he had sworn to take.

Phillip was hardly less surprised than they when he saw his deliverer. Never until now had he seen affection on that stern, relentless face. But there was no doubting it now. The elder Sillaw cut the lad's bonds and put an arm about his shoulders.

"Directly I let you go I knew I was wrong," he said. "I knew that I had been wrong when I thought I disliked you. I came to help you, Phillip. Binstead told me where you were and, God be thanked, I came just in time. Chapin was killed by a political rival in Bisbee three days ago and Hawes died in a hospital in Tucson. The Sillaw name is clean again. The nightmare is over." He smiled a little, "Binstead took me to see your Effie. There is happiness ahead for you."



# THE TRADING POST

EVERY so often a rumor comes out of the past that cuts the ground right out from under one. All-time high in this field was contributed by a famed and venerable pioneer who has the reputation of knowing what he is talking about, and also knowing just about everything there is to know about the West. It was about Jesse James.

When we published Tom Lewis' article, "Jesse James—Saddle Privateer," in a recent issue of FRONTIER, we did so with the feeling that it was an interesting and historical account of the life of one of the West's most famous outlaws. We never considered there might be a sequel, but we were wrong. Apparently there is more than even Mr. Lewis ever dreamed. It constitutes one of the most unusual and surprising stories we have ever printed. According to Mr. Lewis, and all other historians for that matter, Jesse James was killed by the two Ford brothers in 1882. According to a letter which we recently received, he was not killed by those infamous two. In fact, he did not die at all, *but is still living today!*

Our informant in this is Raymond H. Gardner, better known as Arizona Bill, one of the very last of the old pioneers. Arizona Bill spent his early life among the frontiersmen as an Indian scout, a Pony Express rider, deputy marshal, and Arizona Ranger. He was familiar with Deadwood, Tombstone, and the other bad towns of those early days. He knew James well, as he did others of the Old West's famous bad men, and he backs up his startling assertion that James is still alive by remarking that he saw and spoke to him only recently. He writes:

"ARIZONA BILL"

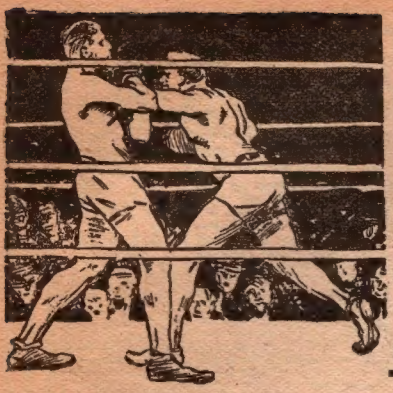
Dear Sirs:

I read the account of Jesse James' life story and will say this for him: he never committed half the crimes that he was accused of. Jesse is alive and active and was here in this city (San Antonio) last fall for a spell. He is 81 years old. I can vouch for him being the real Jesse Woodson James. He was cleared of guilt and was given a clean record by the U. S. Department of Justice.

I hope to see Jesse soon, and he and I will have a fine powwow. So when you write his life up for FRONTIER, say he is alive and living an honorable and clean life. I knew Cole and Jim Younger, too, and Belle Starr took care of me at one time.

Hoping to read more of Mr. Lewis' articles.

I am politely,
Raymond H. Gardner,
(Arizona Bill)



MURDER MITTS, by John Starr, a two-fisted tale of pounding red leather, of blood-mist madness in the roaring realm of Fistiana and in that shadowy half-world of crookdom where the law is "dog eat dog." Also CARPENTIER—TIGER-ORCHID OF THE RING, a real scrapper's life-story by Bart Cassidy.

## FIGHT STORIES

**Now on the newsstands**

LASTROVE, the Pole, bludgeon of the air; Clemingdon the Limey, man of ice; "Skid" Upton—American . . . these were the White Squadron of the Crimea, legion of despair! Read RENEGADE ACE by T. W. Ford, a nerve-gripping story of warfare on the last Russian air-front. Also novels and novelets by George Bruce, Andrew A. Caffrey and Tom O'Neill in the current issue of

## WINGS

**Now on the newsstands**

FIERCE, burning-bright snowglare bit into the Mountie's eyes, blinding him, killing his sight, while behind him mushed the killer, gloating, waiting. . . . SNOWBLIND, by Maurice Coons, a powerful story of a great and terrible valor. Also novels, novelets, and shorts by Walt Coburn, Chart Pitt, Victor Rousseau and other writers of the great dark timberlands and the wild white frontier.

## NORTH•WEST STORIES

**Now on the newsstands**

JUNGLE duel. . . . Jamie Martin died so that a braggart playboy could win a fool love-bet. But Ynez Martin softly planned her revenge. She set a snare by moonlight, baited it with her own flaming beauty. . . . TIGER WOMAN by Capt. Anthony MacGregor. Also NATURE'S CHILDREN, a vivid tale of love on a tropic isle, by Russell Wallace, in the current issue of

## LOVE ROMANCES

**Now on the newsstands**

# BE A RADIO EXPERT

## *Learn at Home-Make Good Money*

Many men I trained at home in spare time make $30, $50, $75 a week. Many make $5, $10, $15 a week in spare time while learning. Illustrated 64-page book describes Radio's opportunities and how you can become a Radio Expert through my practical home training. Television training is included. Money Back Agreement protects you. Mail coupon today for copy of book FREE.

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 7DG,
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.
Send me, without obligation, your 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio" FREE. (Please write plainly.)

NAME.....AGE.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....STATE.....

# FALSE TEETH

60 DAYS TRIAL

I have been making dental plates by mail for many years. I have thousands of satisfied customers. My methods insure satisfaction and save you many dollars. Guaranteed unbreakable, good looking, durable and they fit well. Free impression material and directions. Don't delay. Write today.

**Send No Money**

**DR. HEININGER, 440 W. Huron, Dept. 4528, Chicago**

# GUARANTEED TIRES!

GOODYEAR · GOODRICH
FIRESTONE · U.S. and
Other Standard Makes

**World's Lowest TIRE PRICES**

**Tire users** by the **thousands** all over the U.S.A. vouch for the **Long Hard Service** of our **Standard Brand** tires reconditioned with high grade materials and latest methods by our tire experts. Our **21 years experience** makes it possible to offer tires at **lowest prices**, with **legal agreement** to replace at ½ price any tire that fails to give **12 Mos. Service.**

$2.15 ea. 29x4.40-21

**FREE! LANTERN With Every 2 Tires ordered**

Complete with batteries and newest type reflector bulb. Ready for instant use. Strong, steady light. Useful everywhere. **Order now.**

**EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED!**

**BALLOON TIRES**

| Size Rim | Tires | Tubes |
|---|---|---|
| 29x4.40-21 | $2.15 | $0.85 |
| 29x4.50-20 | 2.35 | .85 |
| 30x4.50-21 | 2.40 | .85 |
| 28x4.75-19 | 2.45 | .95 |
| 29x4.75-20 | 2.50 | .95 |
| 29x5.00-19 | 2.85 | 1.05 |
| 30x5.00-20 | 2.85 | 1.05 |
| 5.25-17 | 2.90 | 1.15 |
| 28x5.25-18 | 2.90 | 1.15 |
| 29x5.25-19 | 2.95 | 1.15 |
| 30x5.25-20 | 2.95 | 1.15 |
| 31x5.25-21 | 3.25 | 1.15 |
| 5.50-17 | 3.25 | 1.15 |
| 28x5.50-18 | 3.35 | 1.15 |
| 29x5.50-19 | 3.35 | 1.15 |
| 6.00-17 | 3.40 | 1.15 |
| 30x6.00-18 | 3.40 | 1.15 |
| 31x6.00-19 | 3.40 | 1.15 |
| 32x6.00-20 | 3.45 | 1.25 |
| 33x6.00-21 | 3.65 | 1.25 |
| 32x6.50-20 | 3.75 | 1.35 |
| 6.00-16 | 3.75 | 1.45 |

**REGULAR CORD TIRES**

| Size | Tires | Tubes |
|---|---|---|
| 30x3½ | $2.35 | $0.75 |
| 31x4 | 2.95 | .85 |
| 32x4 | 2.95 | .85 |
| 33x4 | 2.95 | .85 |
| 34x4 | 3.25 | .85 |
| 32x4½ | 3.35 | 1.15 |

| Size | Tires | Tubes |
|---|---|---|
| 33x4½ | $3.45 | $1.15 |
| 34x4½ | 3.45 | 1.15 |
| 30x5 | 3.65 | 1.35 |
| 33x5 | 3.75 | 1.45 |
| 35x5 | 3.95 | 1.55 |

**HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES**
(High Pressure)

| Size | Tires | Tubes |
|---|---|---|
| 30x5 | $4.25 | $1.95 |
| 33x5 | 4.95 | 1.45 |
| 34x5 | 4.25 | 2.05 |
| 32x6 | 7.95 | 2.75 |
| 36x6 | 5.95 | 3.95 |

| Size | Tires | Tubes |
|---|---|---|
| 34x7 | $10.95 | $3.95 |
| 38x7 | 10.95 | 3.95 |
| 36x8 | 11.45 | 3.95 |
| 40x8 | 13.25 | 4.15 |

**TRUCK BALLOON TIRES**

| Size | Tires | Tubes |
|---|---|---|
| 6.00-20 | $3.75 | $1.65 |
| 6.50-20 | 4.45 | 1.95 |
| 7.00-20 | 5.95 | 2.95 |

| Size | Tires | Tubes |
|---|---|---|
| 7.50-20 | $6.95 | 3.75 |
| 8.25-20 | 8.95 | $4.95 |
| 9.00-20 | 10.95 | 5.65 |
| 9.75-20 | 13.95 | 6.45 |

ALL OTHER SIZES — DEALERS WANTED

**SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT** on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct **5 per cent** if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

**PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.**
**2328-30 S. Michigan Av., Dept. G.R.-5, Chicago, Ill.**

Boys! Boys!

Earn Prizes Make Money

# BIG PRIZES

OH, BOY! What a bike! A long, low, silvery beauty made of stainless, rust-proof aluminum alloy. Light in weight, yet stronger (weight for weight) than steel. Completely streamlined bow-arch frame, 19" high. Fully equipped with hornlite with side navigation lights, streamlined sprocket-wheel guard, coaster brake, luggage carrier, frame pump, and parking stand. A truly wonderful bike. Earn it, and any of 300 other prizes. Mail the coupon today.

BOYS, 12 to 15, you can earn any prize shown here, and any of 300 others, including musical instruments, a portable typewriter, clothing, postage stamps, etc. Besides, you can MAKE MONEY. It's easy. Just deliver our three fine magazines to people whom you secure as regular customers in your own neighborhood. No experience necessary. Need not interfere with school. Many boys earn a prize the very first day. Perhaps you can, too. Mail the coupon, and we'll start you at once.

**Mr. Jim Thayer, Dept. 721**
**The Crowell Publishing Co., Springfield, Ohio**

Dear Jim: Start me earning MONEY and PRIZES at once.

Name.....Age.....

Address.....

City.....State.....

# THE AMAZING CASE OF MICHAEL O'NEIL

## WHO LEARNED HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE!

*(The story shown above actually happened! And the remarkable book described below, "How to Win Friends and Influence People," is the best-selling work of non-fiction today—over 225,000 copies bought since publication, over 25,000 copies per week rushing from the presses!)*

MICHAEL O'NEIL'S problem was that of **thousands—getting along with people.** He is just one example of what Dale Carnegie's help has meant to thousands in **every** line of work!

### How to Win Friends and Influence People

Getting along with others is the most important thing in life. John D. Rockefeller, Sr., said: **"The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee. And I will PAY MORE for that ability than for any other under the sun."**

Chicago University and United Y.M.C.A. Schools made a survey to find the interests of typical men and women. The survey took two years, cost $25,000. It revealed that their first interest is health—their second, **how to understand and get along with people.** How to make people **like** you! How to **win others** to your way of thinking!

People NEED HELP with this problem. And now, out of 25 years' personal experience, has come an amazing book—practical, yet simple. Its methods really **work,** because it has been produced by the one man perhaps better fitted to write it than anyone else—Dale Carnegie. This new book, **"How to Win Friends and Influence People",** is **the only book of its kind in existence!**

### What to Do—How to Do It

As you can see by the chapter headings above, this book tells you exactly how to meet and solve the problems that worry you most.

Do others sometimes "bristle" toward you? Are you self-conscious?—frequently awkward, embarrassed; lacking a personality that appeals to people? Does asking for a raise or looking for a better job frighten you? Do you sometimes give new acquaintances a poor first impression? Do men and women whose friendship you would prize fail to take an interest in you?

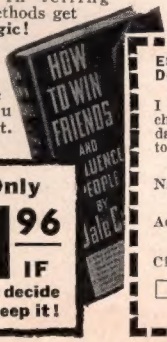
Let this great book help **you!** Letters pour in telling how its easy methods get results like **magic! First** look at this book without obligation. **Then** decide whether you want to own it.

### DALE CARNEGIE

During the last 25 years, Dale Carnegie has trained more than 17,000 people in how to get along with others. Below are just two of hundreds of letters received:

"Have been a Service Station attendant 6 years. I am interested in getting a better job with the Company. My work is getting new customers, holding the old. A man couldn't learn in a lifetime what this book teaches in one reading!"—W. D., Janestown, N. Dakota.

"Rule 3 got me out of the doghouse with my supervisor the morning after I bought the book!"—P. F. S., Spokane, Wash.




**Only $1.96 IF you decide to keep it!**

### THIS IS A BIG BOOK OF THIRTY-SEVEN CHAPTERS, INCLUDING:

Six Ways to Make People Like You Instantly
How to Become a Good Conversationalist
A Simple Way to Make a Good First Impression
How to Interest People
Twelve Ways to Win People to Your Way of Thinking
How to Avoid Making Enemies
How to Get Cooperation
The Movies Do It. Radio Does It. Why Don't You Do It?
How to Criticize—and Not Be Hated for It
Making People Do What You Want
Letters That Produced Magic Results

### SEND NO MONEY

**Try Dealing THIS WAY with People —for Just FIVE Days!**

When you get your copy, simply **read** it: there are no "exercises" to practice. Then try for five days Dale Carnegie's simple methods. Judge for yourself how easily whatever you do, say, or write can win the friendship of others—get them to **like** you, **agree** with you, **do** the things you want them to do.

Send no money. You may pay for this book when delivered—with the definite understanding that its price will be refunded if you wish it. If this book does what we claim, it will mean more **than ANY book you have ever read.** If it doesn't, do not keep it. Mail coupon at once. ESSANDESS BOOKS, Dept. C-356, 386 Fourth Ave., New York.

**ESSANDESS BOOKS,**
**Dept. C-356, 386 Fourth Ave., N. Y. C.**

Send **How to Win Friends and Influence People.** I will pay postman only $1.96 plus few cents postage charges. It is understood that I may read it for 5 days and return it for refund if it does not live up to the claims made.

Name.....

Address .....

City..... State.....

☐ Check here if you prefer to enclose $1.96 WITH this coupon; in that case WE will pay postage. Same refund privilege applies, of course.

# "Bunk!"

—says

## CHARLES ATLAS

CHARLES ATLAS

*Holder of the title "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" won in open competition in the only national and international contest held during the past 15 years.*

# "I'll Prove *in the first 7 days* YOU can have a Body like Mine!"

**No other Physical Instructor in the World has ever DARED to make the offer he makes in this announcement!**

DON'T get the idea that it takes a lot of time and hard work for you to get smashing strength and powerful muscular development! And don't fool yourself into thinking that you need dumbbells, stretchers or any other such contraptions.

Both of these ideas are all bunk—and I have PROVED it. All I need is 7 days to prove what I can do for you! And I don't need any apparatus either. In fact, I have no sympathy with apparatus at all—don't believe in it. It is artificial—and it may strain your heart or other vital organs for life.

### NATURAL Methods Are All I Need

On this page you will see an actual photo of how I look today. This picture has not been changed in any way. No muscles have been "painted on." This photograph is the camera's honest proof of what I have done for MY body. I myself am ready to prove what my secret of **Dynamic Tension** can do for yours!

To look at me now you wouldn't recognize me as the same man I used to be. Then I was a physical wreck, a 97-pound weakling—flat-chested, spindly legs, arms like pipe stems.

I was worried—and I had a right to be. I decided to study myself, to do something about my body. Then I made a discovery. I found a new way to build myself up. A way that was simple, natural, quick and sure! **"Dynamic Tension"** is what I called it. I put this secret to work. And in a short time I had the kind of body you see here—the body which has twice won the title of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

### This Secret Has Helped Thousands

Thousands of other fellows now know this secret, too—and know from their own personal experience what **Dynamic Tension** has done for them. When they turned to me for advice, they were just as frail and puny as I once was. Now they are life-sized examples of what a man can and ought to be—with mighty energy, tireless endurance, and muscles that stand out like bridge-cables all over their bodies.

I have written an interesting booklet filled with pictures, which tells my story—and theirs. I would like to send you a copy of it entirely free.

### Let Me Send You My FREE BOOK

I'd like you to know what **Dynamic Tension** has done for me—what it has done for others—and what it can do for you! This little coupon will bring you my free book which tells all about it. There is no cost or obligation of any kind—and no one will call upon you.

I just want to put into your hands proof that I can do for you what I have done for so many thousands of others: give you broad, powerful shoulders, biceps that bulge with smashing strength, a chest which stands out solid and muscular, and an evenly-developed body that will make others look like dwarfs next to you.

Will you gamble a stamp to win a body like mine? Then mail this coupon TODAY. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 150V, 115 E. 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 150V,
115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of *Dynamic Tension* will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State .....

## FREE BOOK

**Gamble a stamp today. Mail coupon for free copy of my new book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It shows you from actual photos how I have developed my pupils to my own perfectly balanced proportions. Where shall I send your copy? Write your name and address plainly on the coupon. Mail it today to me personally.**

### THIS STERLING SILVER CUP BEING GIVEN AWAY

This valuable cup stands about 14 inches high on a black mahogany base.

I will award it to my pupil who makes the most improvement in his development within the next three months.